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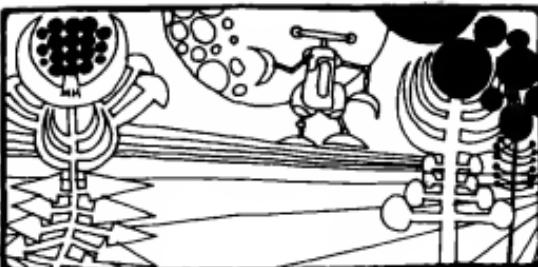
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## **EDITORIAL**

I AM SITTING, as I type this, in Greg Benford's study in his home in Laguna Beach. The roar of the surf is in my ear and the memories of the LACON are still too fresh for evaluation. Some impressions, then:

The International Hotel, in which the convention was held, is a triumph of space-age design: it sits within yards of the landing strip of the Los Angeles International Airport—so close that giant 747s pass by at eye level on the seventh floor—and yet the double-glass windows transmit very little sound. (They also contain the stale blue air from a room party with considerable efficiency.) The elevator system, on the other hand, while superficially modern (the buttons light up from the touch of one's finger's body heat) seemed to fail with monotonous regularity, trapping their occupants for considerable periods of time between floors. It happened to us while we were on our way to the coffee shop for a late-night snack. The elevator stopped between the 2nd floor and the lobby. Sidney Coleman, a Harvard physicist and co-owner of Advent: Publishers (those folks who brought you Damon Knight's *In Search of Wonder*), immediately had the presence of mind to use the emergency telephone installed for that purpose in the elevator.

"Hello. Ah, I would like to report the failure of an elevator," Sid said when the call was answered. "Yes, in this hotel. I am calling you from the elevator."

His call was transferred to someone who had apparently had a great deal of experience with this sort of thing, and Sid repeated himself and then listened, nodding

then and again, and murmuring "Yes, yes... I see... yes..."

He turned from the phone to announce to our crowded car that everything was under control and that he had been assured that we would be out in a jiffy. "Unless, that is," he began to continue, when an alarm bell sounded. The telephone barked in his ear and he looked meaningfully at Bill Rotsler, who had just succeeded in pulling the doors open a few inches. "Unless," Sid repeated in sorrowful tones, "someone messes with the doors. If that happens, it takes ten or fifteen minutes..."

It took at least that long.

THE HUGO AWARDS will be a disappointment to those who were rooting for this magazine, or our sister magazine, FANTASTIC STORIES. However, here for the record are the winners:

Best Novel:

1. *To Your Scattered Bodies Go*, by Philip Jose Farmer
2. *The Lathe of Heaven*, by Ursula K. LeGuin \*
3. *Dragonquest*, by Anne McCaffrey

Best Novella:

1. "The Queen of Air and Darkness," by Poul Anderson
2. "A Meeting With Medusa," by Arthur C. Clarke
3. "The Fourth Profession," by Larry Niven

Best Short Story:

1. "Inconstant Moon," by Larry Niven
2. "Vaster Than Empires and More Slow," by Ursula K. LeGuin

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# THE ASCENDING AYE

## GORDON EKLUND

*Gordon Eklund is fast becoming a unique voice in science fiction; in the brief period since the publication of his first story ("Dear Aunt Annie," FANTASTIC, April, 1970) he has become one of the most sought-after of the newer writers in the field. Now, in this complete short novel, he unveils a curiously surreal picture of a world both like and unlike our own, and tells the compelling story of a man who is elevated from a lifetime of prosaic drudgery into the Tower of his dreams . . . or are they nightmares—?*

Illustrated by JOE STATION

WHEN AFTER MANY HOURS of anticipation Bevans first stood face to face with the Tower, he could barely restrain his tears. It was so huge, so splendid, so divinely magnificent, and this was only the unadorned exterior. What would it be like once he had mounted those high, tilting stairs and passed through that dim and darkening foyer? He did not know, for this building, this monolithic tower, was so far beyond his casual realm of experience as to pass outside the world of reality and enter an area of dreams and fantasy.

Tearing his gaze at last from the Tower, Bevans turned sharply and retraced his steps to the curb. His stride was quick, erect, and proud, for this building was to be his new home. Forty-nine stories it was. He had counted each of them as he stood on the sidewalk and his room, his new home, was

located way up on the third floor. So immense and overwhelming was the purity of his joy that Bevans had to strain to keep himself from leaping in the air like a schoolgirl and clicking his heels together.

The driver was waiting for him atop the ancient and battered cab. The man peered down at Bevans, his eyes enlarged by thick steel-rimmed spectacles, and even the horse seemed to have an air of haughtiness about it. Bevans decided to ignore this open display of courtesy and wait for the driver to make the initial move. It was he after all who was the servant, not Bevans.

The driver said, "Want to move that junk out of my cab, please? I haven't got a full day and it's costing you coin as I wait."

Bevans cast involuntary backward glance at the Tower as if to confirm his position; then he asked the driver for



some assistance. Back at the hotel Bevans had not objected to loading his own possessions but now his stature had changed. Surely the driver owed him the dignity of a helping hand.

The driver stroked his pointed chin and said, "For that, an additional twenty-piece."

Bevans shook his head in astonishment. The man was testing him. In a full week's work he barely earned such a sum. He had no choice now. He went to the rear of the cab. The driver raised his arm and fixed a casual eye on his watch.

There were eighteen large wooden crates in the back of the cab. These crates contained all that Bevans owned in the world. Most were filled with books and papers, small tokens of times past. His wardrobe was small but adequate and the only furniture he possessed was a folding cot.

Bevans removed the eighteen wooden crates and piled them neatly on the sidewalk. He stepped forward and paid the driver. The man lashed at his horse as he drove off. Bevans only shrugged at his disappearing form. The man was merely jealous. It was all too tedious for thought. Hard work. That and diligent concentration. These were the keys to true success. The driver would have to discover this for himself. There was no way to assist him in finding the proper path to gracious living.

It was nearly six o'clock and a few lights had begun to appear in the windows of the Tower, giving it an air of occupation, a homey air, and this pleased Bevans more than he could say.

Using his key, he let himself into the lobby. It was almost as fine as he had

hoped. Plush red carpet covered each square inch and there were large metal letterboxes set in one wall, one box for each resident. Bevans looked around for a doorman or a manager, someone who could help him with the crates, but the lobby was strangely empty, as deserted as an office building after closing hours.

Bevans returned to the walk. In a brief time he had hauled the crates into the lobby and piled them in front of the elevator.

Then he pressed the button that called the machine. The presence of his eighteen crates in this magnificent lobby embarrassed him. He felt an obligation to rid the lobby of these ugly wooden scars as promptly as possible.

But the elevator would not come. Suppressing his rising irritation, Bevans rang again and again. Finally he noticed the sign. It dangled in front of his nose and said quite explicitly in Roman type, *Out of Order*.

Bevans scratched his chin and, bending down, hefted the first of the crates to his shoulder. Without pause, he headed for the escalator and climbed aboard. The steps alternated, black with white, and Bevans rode to the third floor, climbed off, and walked down the hall. He found his room—number 316—and lowered the crate to the floor. Then, turning, he hurried back to the escalator, rode down to the lobby, and returned with another crate.

It seemed to take forever but finally he was finished. His possessions lay neatly in front of the proper door. He had left a narrow path in the hull, but no one had attempted to pass. At least, Bevans had not seen anyone. But he re-

fused to allow himself to become mentally involved with this subject. There were far more important things to consider. The grand moment had arrived at last. In a matter of a few seconds he would gaze for the first time upon his new home.

He held himself back as long as he could. Bevans was a man who thoroughly enjoyed the steady discipline of self-sacrifice, who love holding himself away from the pleasures of life.

At last, when he could not wait a second longer, he removed the keys from his pocket and fitted the proper one to the lock. He opened the door.

Closing his eyes, he stepped inside. Using his hands only, he closed the door at his back. Then he began to count. One . . . two . . . three . . .

When he reached sixty, he opened his eyes.

And gasped.

It was wonderful, even more wonderful than he had imagined. Not just a room. Not just a room twice the size of his old one. But a kitchenette. And a freezer. An electric stove. And a window. A window with a shade.

Bevans hurried immediately to the window and without hesitation drew back the shade. The street lay below, cold and flat as a winter's pond. He watched sleek automobiles cruising and heard the soft clapping of horses and cabs. For five minutes Bevans stood transfixed at the window.

At last, remembering where he was, he turned away and went back to the hall. Quickly he pulled his belongings into the room and closed the door. He took the folding cot and carried it to the corner near the window.

Opening the bed, he sat down and returned his gaze to the window. Three floors below automobile lights flickered and electric streetcars hummed. And this was only a third-floor room. What palaces must lie above on the top floors. Two, three, four-room apartments, with trees and flowers sprouting full grown from plush red and gold carpets. Bevans could barely conceive of such heavenly marvels.

He hurried over to his belongings, opened one of the crates, and removed a book. The volume was one of his particular favorites, *Rachmore's Memories of the Old City*, a sad and gentle remembrance of the author's childhood and youth. Bevans lay on the bed, his eyes never far from the window, and read.

And as he read, he began to cry. The tears came slowly at first, but steadily, then faster, more freely, and soon they were rushing down his face in an unquenchable stream. Bevans could not help himself. He cried and as he cried he grew tired and laid his book aside and soon he was asleep and as he slept he dreamed and in his dreams he wept.

For joy, that is. Bevans wept for joy and leaped straight into the air, clicking his heels together like a schoolgirl. In his dreams Bevans did this. Only in his dreams.

WHEN HE HAD received the notice directing him to report to Mr. Alston at eleven o'clock, Bevans had been afraid. He had been more thoroughly afraid than at any moment in his life since the time four years earlier when he had also received a notice directing him to report to Mr. Alston. Mr. Alston was

president of the firm and Bevans was merely a chief clerk, one of five hundred. It was a good job, but Bevans could not enjoy it. He lived in constant fear of demotion to assistant chief clerk and this notice only intensified his fear.

Exactly at eleven o'clock, Bevans tapped gently on Mr. Alston's door. A voice told him to enter and he did.

Mr. Alston was a tall, dignified man of indeterminate years, with fierce white hair sprouting from his head in great unmanageable clumps. He told Bevans to sit, then took a document from his desk and began to study it.

Bevans fidgeted nervously in his chair. He stared at the reverse side of the document, trying his best to make some sense out of it. He failed to fully understand any of this. He had done good work in his job. It had been four years since his last important error, when in the course of a minor war he had placed a large bet on the wrong side. But he would never repeat that mistake. He had learned his lesson well. So, what could this document possibly contain that could harm him?

Mr. Alston continued to study the document. A minute passed. And two. Bevans fidgeted, fighting a frightening urge that told him to grab the document, tear it apart, and be done with the whole mess.

At last Mr. Alston relaxed. He looked at Bevans, took the document and tossed it across the desk. It landed in Bevans's lap.

"Look at that," Mr. Alston said. "And tell me what you think."

Bevans lifted the document in his hands and glanced quickly at it. The document was, he suddenly realized, a

photograph. The photograph displayed a tall stately building highlighted against a clear sparkling sky. Bevans had seen several such buildings on the outskirts of the city. They were lovely structures but what could they possibly have to do with him?

"A fine building," Bevans said. "A pleasant day."

"Yes," said Mr. Alston. "It certainly was—and is. You really like it, do you? The building I mean."

"Oh, yes," said Bevans. "It's quite well constructed."

"I'm glad you think so. You see, you'll soon be living there. Late yesterday I received a call from the Housing Commission. You're to go there at once and they'll have your key."

Bevans could not find the words with which to express his astonishment. He said: "Sir?"

"Yes, Bevans?"

"Am I to understand that I am to live . . . to live in this . . ." He waved the photograph in the air. ". . . this building?"

Mr. Alston dropped his eyes and said softly, "Yes."

"Oh." Bevans stumbled to his feet. "Oh, thank you, sir." He turned toward the door.

Mr. Alston called, "Wait a minute, Bevans."

Bevans stopped and turned. Had Mr. Alston forgotten something? Had he realized that this had all been a mistake?

Mr. Alston said, "There seems to be a misunderstanding. Don't thank me for this, please. It was a decision of the government. I want you to know that I

was not involved. Strictly a government decision. As far as I'm concerned, you're one of my best people. Do you understand?"

"I understand. Of course I understand." Bevans was smiling again.

"Good. Good. Then that will be all."

"Thank you, sir."

Bevans fled the office immediately, before Mr. Alston had another opportunity to change his mind. He decided to proceed at once to the Housing Commission. He could return later in the evening to complete his required twelve hours. Fortunately he had nothing pressing on his calendar.

Twenty-four years, he thought, as he searched the crowded city streets for a vacant taxi. Twenty-four years he had occupied a tiny room in a bleak hotel without expectation of escape. For that, he would need a promotion, and he was already too old. Vice-Presidents were chosen from among those chief clerks in their twenties and thirties. Bevans was forty-four years old. It was too late for him; his time had passed. Or so he'd thought.

But now it had come, out of the blue and without a promotion.

Why? Bevans wondered. What had he done to deserve this honor?

Perhaps, he could not help thinking, it was all an error.

But, no. He refused to consider the possibility. It hadn't been an error, and when he finally set eyes upon his new home, he was sure of it.

## II

BEVANS WOKE to see the face. It lay inches from his, fat and pale, a bloated

monstrosity, with yellow teeth and black eyes. The face grinned at him and Bevans screamed.

The face drew away. Bevans sat up.

The face had turned into a small withered old man with a crooked toothless grin. "What are you doing here?" Bevans said. "Who let you in?" The old man was remarkably pale, as if he'd been dipped in chalk dust, but his eyes were clear and strong.

"I let myself in," the man said. "I'm sorry if I startled you."

"That's all right," Bevans said. He tried to get out of bed but found that he hadn't the strength. He lay back down and listened to the reassuring hum of traffic from behind. "Who are you?" he asked the man.

"Potroi's the name—call me that. I'm only gathering my things. Won't be but a moment."

Bevans said, "Go ahead," and blinked his eyes. He was tired. He could barely keep his eyes open.

Potroi crossed the room and opened a drawer that was set in one wall. He removed a black leather handbag from the drawer, peeked inside it, smiled at Bevans, then closed it.

"All here," he said.

"What do you mean?" Bevans felt his strength slowly returning. He forced himself to stand. "What are you doing with that bag?"

"It's mine, of course," said Potroi. "My worldly possessions, so to speak. Well—" he shrugged "—be seeing you." He headed for the door.

Bevans ran over and blocked his exit. He grabbed the bag away from Potroi and gripped it tightly in both hands. Who was this old man who came

sneaking around private residences? What was he doing with this bag?

"Now we'll see what's going on," Bevans said, and he opened the bag.

"Help yourself," Potroi said, folding his arms across his chest.

Bevans peered inside the bag. It seemed filled with old and musty clothing, nothing else. He ran a hand through the bag and touched something hard and metallic. He removed the object with care. It was an alarm clock.

"What do you want with these things?" Bevans asked.

"Don't you listen? I told you. My worldly possessions."

"But what are they doing here? In my room?"

"It's my room too," Potroi said. "I mean, until today it was my room. When I moved upstairs this morning I forgot the bag. That's all. Now if you don't mind . . ."

Potroi put out his hand and Bevans hesitantly placed the bag in it.

"Thank you," Potroi said. He turned and headed for the door.

"Wait," said Bevans. "Hold on a moment, please." He was afraid. If Potroi had truly moved upstairs, then he must be someone very important indeed. Bevans was afraid that he'd unnecessarily offended this powerful old man.

Potroi stopped and shook his head impatiently. "If I were you," he said, "I'd be getting myself back to work. You're late, you know."

"Yes," Bevans said. "Yes, I—wait. Please wait. How did you know I had to return to work this evening?"

Potroi put his hands on his hips and glanced at Bevans. "Do you take me

for a fool?"

"No," Bevans said. "Of course I don't. It's just—but you're right. I fell asleep. With my book, by the window. I'm very late."

"Then hadn't you ought to be going?" Potroi made another attempt at departure and again Bevans blocked his way.

"How do you like your new quarters?" he asked, in a desperate attempt at cordiality.

"Down here was fine," Potroi said. He seemed to be thinking. "But nobody asked my opinion."

"But you're still in this building. Isn't it the building that's really important?"

"All the way up," Potroi said, pointing.

"The top floor?"

"The forty-ninth. With her. But, as I said, I like it better down here. More freedom of movement, you know. You're a lucky man, Bevans." Potroi put a firm hand around the doorknob. "I must be going," he said, and was gone.

Bevans tumbled back to the bed and sat on the edge. So this was the man who had proceeded him in these wondrous quarters. Frankly, Potroi was not what Bevans would have expected. If anything, he had imagined the Tower filled with dozens of neatly dressed replicas of Mr. Alston. He was the only truly important man Bevans had ever met before. Potroi, too, was undoubtedly an important man. If not, he would never have been allowed to occupy the top floor of the Tower. Perhaps Potroi was a government man. That might explain why he did not look the least like Mr. Alston. Bevans had

never met a government man before, not an important one. Perhaps they all looked like Potroi. But that wasn't necessary so, Bevans knew. In other professions—in banking, for instance, and insurance—there was a great dissimilarity in the features of various members.

Bevans looked at his watch. It was already past eleven o'clock. He could not hope to reach the firm much before midnight, which meant he would have to work straight through until morning. Calculating rapidly in his head he arrived at the figure of five P.M. as the earliest he could stop with his working hours in order.

Although he had often worked long hours previously, Bevans was not sure that he was prepared for such a long grind. He felt especially weak and tired, drained of all energy. It took all of his strength merely to snap the buttons of his overcoat.

It was the excitement of the day, he suspected, which had left him feeling so spent and exhausted. Once back into the normal routine of the office he would feel much better. He didn't dare ignore his work now. He could not bear the thought of demotion and a subsequent return to his old quarters. He'd had a taste of the good sweet life. He'd rather die now than give it up.

When he was dressed in his working suit, Bevans left the room. He carefully latched the door and tested it twice before proceeding down the corridor. The elevator was still not working, so he rode the escalator down to the lobby.

He paused there to stare once again at its splendidly ornate beauty and as he did he noticed a light come on above

the elevator door. The light indicated that the elevator was operating again. He watched as it quickly descended from the forty-ninth floor to the lobby. When it stopped, the doors opened and a woman got out. She was young, no more than thirty, with strong sharp features and clear light eyes. She was tall, much taller than Bevans, at least six feet.

He nodded quickly to her and said, "Good evening." He smiled. The woman had obviously come from the top floor. The elevator had not paused during its downward journey. He must be carefully polite with her. Once already this evening he had offended an important person. It would not do to make the same mistake again.

"You must be Bevans," the woman said. She reached out with her right hand and gently touched Bevans's hand with her own. "My name is Thea. This is your first day with us."

"Yes," said Bevans. "In fact, I have only been here a few hours."

The woman smiled and turned toward the street. She turned to see if Bevans was following, then waved at him. Cautiously he followed her to the street.

At the bottom of the steps she paused and allowed him to catch up with her. She smiled and said. "No reason to hide back there, Bevans. Aren't we both going the same way?"

"I think so," Bevans said.

"Certainly, so come along." She turned and walked quickly away toward the center of the city. Bevans fell into step with her.

They went a full block in silence, then Bevans tried: "A very pleasant evening

indeed."

"Why, yes," Thea said. "Though perhaps a little warm. A good night for walking, if not for working."

"Are you going to work?"

"Oh, no." She laughed, a light joyful cry. "I meant you, Bevans. You are the one who works."

"I enjoy my job," he said.

"You don't have to defend it. Some work, others don't. It's all an accident, a matter of fate. We are born to this father or that. One is wealthy and the other is poor. In the long run, it is meaningless."

Bevans nodded politely. They had come a considerable distance now, their conversation interspersed with long periods of silence. Here in the central portion of the city there were only a few people about and these were primarily soldiers, their bright uniforms turned pale yellow by the stark artificial light. Bevans had never served in the army and he did not like soldiers. Not that it had been his fault really. He had reached maturity during a rare moment of national peace, and when war had come at last, he had been rejected for service because of his bad eyes. Not his fault at all. Purely an accident of time and fate. But Bevans still felt a certain measure of guilt whenever he saw a soldier. And lately, during the past month or so, he had seen a great many soldiers.

As they passed a group of soldiers, the men turned to watch them. Bevans slumped his shoulders and kept his eyes pointed firmly ahead. He walked quickly and Thea kept pace with him.

"You are a very handsome woman," he told her, once they'd entered a

warehouse district, empty and quiet. "I feel happy walking with you when the men stare."

"Why, thank you, Bevans," she said and laughed again.

"I saw the soldiers watching you," he said. "I thought they were watching me because I never served. But it wasn't me. It was you."

"Isn't that sad?"

Bevans did not understand this remark, so he nodded thoughtfully.

"The war is coming," Thea said, "and there they are, soldiers in the streets, watching pretty girls, but in a month, a week even, many of them will be dead. I think that's very sad."

"I have heard that this new enemy is very powerful, that their soldiers, drugged with poisons, fight like wild and ruthless animals."

"I have heard that too."

Passing out of the warehouse district, they entered the Sunrise Community. This was an area that had been given over to the poor and jobless. Bevans hated to bring Thea into such an ugly part of the city but it was the quickest way between the Tower and his office. People clustered in the streets here like ants. Several large auditoriums had been opened by the government in order to shelter the homeless but many still preferred to sleep in the streets. Bevans led Thea through the mob.

He no longer felt especially weak or tired. The walk had brought back his normal strength and energy. Pressing through the people, he felt no hesitation in using his elbows and fists to clear a path. Thea followed compliantly, her composure as concealing as a dark veil.

"It's awful here," Bevans said over

his shoulder. "But small—only a few blocks."

Thea caught him by the sleeve and forced him to halt. She said, "While we're here, I want to do some shopping. Are the merchants open this late?"

"They're always open," Bevans said. "But is it really—?"

"I'm sorry. You're in a hurry, of course. Please go ahead without me. I forgot that you had to work."

"Oh, no," Bevans said quickly. "I'll be happy to stay with you."

"That's very nice of you, Bevans."

Thea was plainly familiar with the Sunrise Community. She led Bevans around a corner, then down a narrow alley. The alley stank. At the end of it was a large open space containing several stalls and benches.

Thea paused here. "I only want to look at the jewelry," she said. "It shouldn't take long."

Bevans nodded and followed her.

She approached one of the stalls and waited in front of it. A tall elderly man with a great swooping mustache smiled at her. "Miss?" he said.

"Do you have any coral jewelry? I'd like to look at some."

"For you, only my best," said the merchant. Still smiling, he reached underneath his bench. He handed Thea a bright coral necklace which glimmered in the dull light. "It is lovely," he said, "and a fitting gift for you."

Thea smiled and dropped the necklace over her head. She turned to Bevans and said, "How do you like it?"

"It's fine," he said.

"Then I think I'll take it." The merchant named a price which seemed quite modest to Bevans. Thea paid him.

"Just one more moment," she told Bevans. "Another merchant I want to see and then—"

She was interrupted. A voice said: "A half-piece, sir. Surely a man as fine as you can spare a half-piece."

Bevans looked down at the voice. The Sunrise Community normally flocked with beggars, but they were easily gotten rid of. What Bevans saw at his feet, however, startled him. The beggar was a boy of fifteen or sixteen, riding on a cart. He was armless and his legs ended at the knees. His face had been horribly burned. His ears and nose were dark stubs of charred flesh. Bevans tried to move around the boy.

"But only a half-piece, sir," the beggar said, crawling along the ground after Bevans. Thea had drawn away from him and he was alone now. He and the beggar.

"A half-piece, sir. For food and shelter."

"No." Bevans tried to go around the boy again but the cart blocked his way.

And he screamed.

And fell to the ground, clutching and twisting. His face. His face. It felt as if a great hand had fallen from the sky and twisted the flesh on his face. Bevans grabbed for his eyes and could not find his hands. Or legs.

He screamed again but heard nothing, deaf to his own voice, trapped alone with the pain, alone inside his own body. He forced himself to see and got one eye open but the world he saw was not his world. This was a place of monstrous angles, unbelievable shapes, huge tilting rocks and trees, high mountains that twisted into the sky like broken wires, and people who were not

people, but dying. Bevans screamed again and again but heard nothing.

It wasn't the pain that made him scream, terrible as it was. It was a thing beyond pain, something from within the very inside of him. An emptiness. A void. A great hollow nothing.

From far away he heard a whisper. It said, "Move away. Please."

The void began to fill.

Bevans forced both eyes open and looked at the world. The pain lessened, eased, ebbed, receded.

"Thea," he said to the face above him.

"Are you all right?"

Bevans spoke truthfully. "No."

"Can you stand?"

"I think so."

"I'll help you."

He heard her ask for help. Two big men, who looked like beggars themselves, helped him find his feet. Bevans pulled away from them and took an unsteady step.

"I can do it," he said.

"You can walk?"

"Yes." He took another step to prove himself. Then he asked: "What happened to him?"

"The boy. The beggar. The one who..."

"I didn't see anyone," she said. "Why? Did a beggar attack you?"

"No, it was like . . . like I was him and . . . I can't explain it."

"I saw no one," she said.

"But you were . . ." He didn't complete the sentence. Instead he said, "It was just a spell. Too hot tonight. I had better go now. It is getting very late."

"You're all right?"

"Yes, I'm fine. It was the excitement

of the day, my move, the heat. I have only a few blocks to go."

"I will see you at the Tower," she said.

"Yes." Bevans bowed in her direction. "It was a pleasure," he said and hurried away.

He maintained a quick pace until he was safely outside the edge of the Sunrise Community, then slowed to a normal walk. Around him tall buildings lunged at the sky like great trees and street lights cast their beams like small suns.

The beggar was a witch.

Bevans was convinced of that now. The spell had come not from within, but from without. It had come from the boy, from the witch child. There was no other solution that made sense. Yes, the boy was certainly a witch.

For a time, for what had seemed like hours but had only been a moment or two, Bevans had shared life with the beggar child. He had lived inside a body that was scarred, torn, and without limbs. He had felt the emptiness of a world filled only with hate, disgust, pity, and compassion.

Bevans considered going to the police, but soon saw the futility of the move. The police kept a close eye on any known witches. The boy would eventually be caught and convicted unless he soon changed his ways. There was nothing Bevans could do to hasten the process. It was only a matter of time. Bevans calmed himself with a mental picture of the boy dangling from the gallows. He smiled.

When he reached the office at last, it was already nearing one o'clock and seventeen consecutive hours of labor

awaited him. Bevans entered the foyer and proceeded toward the stairs. A man approached him going in the opposite direction. Bevans looked and saw that it was Mr. Alston. He prepared to greet the man.

When he was only a few feet away, Mr. Alston suddenly looked up and saw Bevans. Quickly he ducked his head, turned his face to the wall and continued toward the door.

Bevans watched him go and shook his head.

After a moment, he continued toward the stairs, mounted them, and proceeded to his desk on the next floor. There were five other men in the room, working late, but none sat close enough that Bevans felt required to recognize their presence. He buried himself in his work and kept his eyes turned downward.

Bevans wanted to work. He wanted to work because he did not want to think. Thinking could do him no good. Bevans had seen the expression on Mr. Alston's face when they had passed each other. He did not understand this expression. He did not want to think about it.

The expression had been one of fear. There was no other way on putting it. Pure and simple fear. Mr. Alston had been afraid of Bevans.

And now Bevans, too. He was afraid and he did not know why.

### III

FOR BEVANS the following seventeen hours slipped past with the ease of water flowing down a mountain stream. He had often found this to be true. If

one worked as diligently as one could, if one threw all of one's energies into the task at hand, then time would present no obstacle. It would not exist as a thing apart from the man himself. It would flow.

The impending war had created a great amount of work, much of which had fallen into Bevans's hands. He did not object. He enjoyed his work, even when it was difficult or tedious.

When his seventeen hours were finished, he first put his desk into neat and perfect order. Then he went to the timekeeper in order to verify his attendance. After that, he headed for the street.

He had decided to take a bus home today. It was early yet, and the buses were still relatively uncrowded. He found the proper corner, waited five minutes, and boarded the bus when it arrived.

Bevans took a seat at the rear, where he could observe his fellow passengers without being seen. This was obviously a very fine bus route. Nearly everyone on board seemed of high birth. Bevans was proud of the opportunity to enjoy their company.

He watched everyone who boarded the bus, wondering if this man or that woman might be a neighbor of his. Except for Thea and Potroi, he had still not yet seen any of his neighbors. Each time a suspect disembarked as the bus moved further toward the outskirts of the city, Bevans heaved a little sigh of disappointment. By the time the bus reached the Tower at last, Bevans was the only remaining passenger.

He got off quickly, nodding at the driver, and paused at the walk. He

turned his eyes toward the sky and there, directly in front of him, it was. The Tower, as big and beautiful as the world's tallest mountain.

Bevans stared at his new home for many minutes. Finally, regretfully, lowering his eyes, he marched up the steps. He knew that he ought to be tired, eager for the chance to crawl into bed. He hadn't had a satisfactory rest in two full days and the interim had been filled with excitement and adventure.

Bevans rode the escalator to his room, looking this way and that, the steps going black, then white, black, then white, hoping to catch a glimpse of a neighbor. But the escalator was empty and the halls were deserted. He reached his room without seeing a soul.

He went inside and immediately threw off his clothes. He didn't feel tired but knew he needed the rest. He got into bed, forced his eyes closed, and prepared for sleep.

Sometime later Bevans opened his eyes. He faced the window and through it, outside, lay a blanket of concealing blackness.

Bevans stared at the window and the emptiness beyond it. A voice in his head seemed to whisper: *This is wrong; this is not as it should be.* But Bevans did not understand this. What was wrong? The sun had set and it was dark. What could be more normal than that?

Then the face appeared at the window. Bevans suddenly realized it had been there all along but his eyes had somehow managed to avoid it until now.

Carefully he studied the face and it turned as he watched, exposing a man's

full body. The man was standing vertically just outside the window as though his feet were supported by the ground rather than the air. The man was very pale, white as soap. His face was old but his eyes were young.

Bevans could still see nothing wrong here. He remembered the man now. It was old Potroi, who had occupied these quarters before Bevans had come. Perhaps Potroi had forgotten something else, another bag of old clothing, had come to claim it. Nothing abnormal about that.

Head first, sliding, Potroi came through the window, floated past Bevans and landed on the far side of the bed. Bevans looked at the window. It was intact, untouched by the man's passage. Beyond it, the emptiness waited.

Bevans turned his head to watch Potroi, who crouched at the edge of the bed. Their eyes met, touched, held. Then Potroi moved.

He rose into the air again, swimming through it like water, and floated above the bed. Slowly he lowered himself until he was only inches above Bevans. Their eyes touched again and their chins nearly met.

Potroi came closer. Down and down. Lower and lower. And then, continuing, their bodies touched. And then, continuing, Potroi came inside him. Potroi became Bevans and Bevans Potroi. One into one and one. This was the answer. The answer was one.

Bevans remembered, as Potroi moved through him, that this had happened before. The first night and he had awakened, frightened and dazed, and he had not remembered, not then, but

now he realized the emptiness of his fear. Potroi was old. Old men too must live. Potroi consumed and by consuming he lived. Bevans knew this and he smiled, relaxed, allowing Potroi to feed.

A voice: "Potroi."

The voice came again, louder, sharp as a whip, and Potroi was drawn, struggling, from inside of Bevans, pulled up and up—and out. Out, and he stood at the side of the bed.

Bevans turned to watch.

Thea stood just inside the door, her hands on her hips. She glared at the pale old man. "What are you doing here?"

"Damn her," said Potroi. "Damn and damn her. I have to live. I can't go on, waiting and sitting and starving. I'm going to die."

"She decides, Potroi."

"Damn her."

Bevans wanted to ask a question but found that he was unable to make use of his lips or tongue. A great exhaustion had come over him, worse than the first time, so he lay on the bed, his head slightly turned, and listened.

"Bevans belongs to me," Thea said. "You can destroy everything with your greed. I saw it last night when I went with him into the city. Bevans was weak and used and he had a spell. It was nearly all over, right then, all of her plans."

"You're lying," Potroi said.

"We had come to the Sunrise Community. It was nearing midnight and there was a beggar. A boy of great strength and suffering. Bevans was open to him."

"No. An accident. It's too soon."

"But it could have happened. And, Potroi—it did happen."

"Did you tell her?"

"I will."

Potroi laughed, cackling. "Then she'll destroy me. Oh my, you're so merciful, sister."

"Get out of here, Potroi. Tell her yourself and perhaps she will show you mercy. It is beyond me. Just go."

Potroi, muttering, walked to the door. "If I am consumed, it will be your doing."

"Go."

He went.

Thea approached the bed, walking, and Bevans discovered that he could now move his eyes. Thea was sad and beautiful and naked except for a narrow belt, little more than a string, which circled her hips and dipped between her thighs. She stood at the edge of the bed and removed the belt.

"I'm sorry," she told Bevans. "Potroi hurried you. It wasn't right—fair to you. It came too soon. You were not prepared."

And, like Potroi, she came to him, flowing down and through and into, like a river flowing to an ocean, and once inside him, with love, with grace, with ease, she calmed him, soothed him, loved him. It was so different with her. Potroi, greedily, had taken without giving, but Thea, generous, gave even more than she took. It was a time of sharing and Bevans, whole man, whole being, was kissed and bathed and made warm.

If he'd been able to move, he would have wept, or shouted, or cried, or screamed, or moaned. He would have laughed.

The sharing continued, almost forever, but soon, too soon, it came time for her to depart. She left slowly, with care and tenderness, and there was no shock of withdrawal this time, and when it was over and done, Thea stood above the bed and her eyes touched his. She drew the belt around her waist and thighs.

"This is the way," she said.

Bevans understood. The way.

"It will happen again. And often."

She left through the door.

#### IV

TEN DAYS WENT PAST in the flickering of an eye and Bevans, sitting at a desk heaped high with war documents, received a message directing him to report to Mr. Alston. At once and without delay.

Bevans took the message to the time-keeper, who initialed it and his records, and Bevans headed upstairs, clutching a yellow travel permit which gave him legal access to all corridors of the building.

Mr. Alston's office was located on the third and uppermost floor and Bevans had to pass the secretary pool, which occupied most of this floor. As he went by them—three hundred young women at three hundred electric typewriters—he was assaulted by feelings and desires. All of the normal ones were there, the ones to which he had grown readily accustomed during the last week and a half, but they were even stronger than usual, boredom and hunger and fatigue, but there were others here that he seldom sensed downstairs with the clerks. There was worry

and fear and shame and guilt and longing and, strongest of all, strangest of all, an overwhelming sensation of pure and sensual desire. Bevans did not understand this, knew only that he didn't like it, and hurried quickly past.

He reached Mrs. Rutledge's desk. She was Mr. Alston's private secretary. A cold woman of thirty or thirty-five. Like a lead container, this woman, with everything locked inside.

Bevans nodded at her, stepped past and into Mr. Alston's small office. He stopped at once, frozen, assaulted by guilt and fear.

Alston sat behind his desk. A gun lay closely at his side.

"I have to talk to you," he said. "I can't stand this."

"What is it?" Bevans said. He shut the door and came inside, taking a chair. "How can I help you, sir?"

Alston jumped to his feet and went to a nearby window. He kept one eye on the gun and said, "Nothing's wrong. Who said something was wrong? If you don't object, I'll ask the questions."

"Of course, sir," Bevans said. Now that Alston had moved farther away, he felt better.

"I want to know . . . to know how you've been feeling lately."

"Fine," Bevans said. "Better than I've felt in my life."

"Your work has been satisfactory," Alston said. "These are not easy times."

"The war," Bevans said.

"Yes. Perhaps you haven't heard. Fighting has broken out along the borders."

"It has been expected."

"Yes, but war is never a nice sub-

ject." Alston paused a moment, then wheeled, striding to his desk. He stood near the gun and watched Bevans. "And how do you like your new home? In the Tower?"

Bevans answered unhesitatingly. "I feel proud to live in such a splendid structure. It is far more than I deserve."

Alston nodded and said, "Undoubtedly." He headed back toward the window, reached it, stopped, and looked outside. Bevans sat upright and tried to see past Alston's narrow shoulders. A tall skyscraper lay across the alley. Alston appeared to be watching a young woman who stood at the opposite window, her back toward the glass.

Turning, Alston said, "Your move came as a surprise to all of us here at the firm. Your work has always been excellent—I want you to know that. You're one of my best clerks. This decision to have you moved. Strictly a government thing. I want you to know that."

"You've told me before, sir."

"The government often does things we people cannot understand. That is the way of all good governments. In troubled times like these, a certain amount of secrecy is required. But there is always a good and sufficient reason for whatever the government does, even though it may not be visible to people like you and me. Do you understand this, Bevans?"

"I think I do, sir."

Alston began to pace. From the window to the desk, from the desk to the window. Window . . . desk. Desk . . . window. "Could you," he asked, as he paced, "tell me anything about the

other occupants of your building?"

"Why do you want to know?"

Alston stopped and fumbled. Words slipped across his tongue. At last, he managed: "Mere curiosity on my part. If you'd rather . . ."

"Oh, I don't mind discussing it, sir. It's only that I've seen so few people at the Tower. Only an old man and—"

"Just an old man?"

"And a woman."

Alston nodded. "A woman—yes—I thought so. An old woman? A huge woman?"

"No. This one is young and very pretty. And very tall. She does not work."

"You are sure of this? No other woman? Not a fat one?"

"Not that I've seen. Only this young woman and the old man. Both of them live on the top floor of the Tower. The old man previously occupied my quarters. I met him only once and then briefly." Bevans opened his hands. "I keep odd hours and see few people. Most residents of the Tower are, I believe, without work."

Alston, who had continued pacing as Bevans talked, stopped suddenly and sat down behind his desk. He dropped his head in his hands. Bevans thought he heard stifled sobs. Bevans felt pain and worry. And fear: that was still strongest of all.

He said, "Did I say something wrong?"

Alston looked up. There were tears in his eyes. "No one from the government has talked to you? You have not been directed to keep anything from me?"

Bevans said, "No."

"I believe you," Alston said. "It's

only—" and now he began to cry openly"—I know I'm going to lose my job and your move—this war—they can only mean one thing."

"But why, sir?" Bevans asked. "You have been president of our firm for thirty years. Why should you lose your job?"

"I'll be forced to vacate my home. My wife will find another man. I will live in the Sunrise Community, begging for food and sleeping in the streets. Bevans, I am seventy-eight years old. I know I don't look it but I am. I can't do it. I will die."

Alston lowered his head again and cried, his shoulders shaking from the force of his sobs. Bevans waited but Alston had forgotten him.

The pain was too immense for Bevans to bear. He got to his feet and crossed softly to the door. He paused there, distance easing the rawness of the pain, and said, "May I go now?"

Alston said nothing.

"Good-bye," Bevans said.

And Alston continued to cry.

WHEN Bevans arrived home from work that evening at seven o'clock sharp, he picked up a book on his way to bed and lay down to read for a few hours before going to sleep. This was his normal evening routine. Despite the kitchenette, he still ate dinner downtown at a small cafe before heading for home. He preferred to keep his evenings free of household chores, reserving any cleaning and scrubbing for his Sundays. In the evening, he would rather relax in his peaceful sanctuary, read and think, or write a letter to his mother who still lived alone in

the Northern County.

But this night, Bevans found it nearly impossible to concentrate on his book. Out of the corner of his eye, he kept catching fleeting glimpses of something large and still. He had seen these visions before and had refused to let them disturb him. But they were more distinct than ever this evening. It was as if the room were filled with large, quick-footed beasts who never paused long enough in their wanderings to allow him to see them clearly.

Bevans laid his book aside and fixed his hands behind his neck. Something was plainly bothering him and it was something more substantial than a few imaginary creatures. It wasn't the interview with Alston. Bevans had long since put that into proper perspective. It was the war, he'd decided. The war was disturbing everyone. On the bus coming home, a man had been listening to the news. Bevans had overheard. The enemy had broken the national lines and captured several small border towns. A division of crack troops was being moved forward in an attempt to recapture these towns. Rumors of bombing raids were heard everywhere. The radio said it could never happen. For himself, Bevans was not afraid. He had lived through many wars and they had seldom touched him. But it might be different for Alston. He was an old man and old men are easily frightened. This was undoubtedly the proper explanation.

But Bevans was still restless. He wasn't content with his book, bed, and window. He wanted something more. He wanted to go outside, into the streets. He wanted to meet people and

talk. This was what he could not understand. Since his move to the Tower, he had tended to avoid people even more than usual. He would let a loaded bus pass, two full buses, in order to catch one that was nearly empty. The closeness of people, even people he did not know, disgusted him. He preferred solitude, aloneness in the Tower.

But, the restlessness did not go away.

At last, getting up from the bed and unable to make himself stop, he went into the hall, carefully latching the door behind him.

Standing in the corridor, alone, he paused to think. There was really no reason why he had to go outside in order to find company. There were forty-nine floors in the Tower. The third floor alone held more than thirty rooms. If he wanted people, there were plenty here. All he had to do was step down the corridor, knock on a door, and wait, smiling.

He walked across the corridor and tapped gently on the door. He smiled and waited.

When he wasn't immediately answered, he knocked again. Still, no reply. None of this particularly surprised Bevans. Several days ago he had firmly decided that he must be the only one who lived on this floor. He had never seen anyone in the halls, though once he spent an entire evening watching. On several occasions he had listened at other doors but heard nothing.

To be positive, however, he walked down the hallway and knocked at the next door. Again there was no immediate reply, but this time Bevans did something extraordinary. He reached

down, grabbed the doorknob, and turned it.

The door opened silently.

Startled, Bevans jumped back. He took a deep breath and peered into the room. He could see nothing. It was dark. He took a step forward and reached around the door. His fingers found the light switch and clicked it.

Brightness flooded the room. Bevans stepped inside and closed the door silently at his back.

The room was almost a duplicate of his own. The walls and ceiling were painted the same shade of shallow yellow. The floor was equally bare. There was a kitchenette, a refrigerator, a stove.

A tiny window with a pink shade.

Bevans went to the window and drew back the shade. The view was the opposite of the one he had from his window, but there was actually very little true difference. There was another street below, but with the same cars, cabs and buses. Across the street were several houses, which seemed small and tiny, dwarfed by the magnificence of the Tower.

Bevans dropped the shade and went around the room. It was clean, immaculately so. He went into the kitchenette and ran his fingers along the top of the refrigerator. There wasn't a speck of dust. He did the same with the stove. No grime. Equally clean.

Shaking his head, he went around the main room again, inspecting for dust. He looked in the corners and on the window ledge. He found nothing. The room had clearly been cleaned only moments before his arrival.

Bevans extinguished the light. He

went back to the hallway.

He went to the next room, tried the knob, and found it open. He reached for the light. He heard a noise and his fingers stopped. It was a scampering sound as if something were hurrying to hide before being flooded with light.

Bevans turned on the light.

The room was bare. Empty.

This was another near duplicate of his own quarters. Bevans inspected for dust and again found nothing. After a short while, he left.

Bevans proceeded down the hallway and checked each room as he came to it, moving from side to side. He discovered little that he'd not already seen. But the noises, the patter of something rushing to hide, became progressively louder as he continued, more distinct. He was certain now that the noises were made by an animal, a big one, not several small ones as he'd first thought. Were these sounds made by the same creature he thought he'd seen earlier in his own room? If so, what was it, and why was it following him?

Bevans came at last to the end of the hall. There was one more room here and he opened it.

This room was different.

For the most part it wasn't different; it was the same. The walls were painted yellow, the floor was bare, and it was empty. The difference was that it hadn't been empty for long.

From the doorway Bevans could easily look into the kitchenette. There, on a small table in the middle of the room, two steaming trays of hot food cooled in the air.

Bevans went into the room and closed the door.

Signs of recent occupancy were all around him. A bed in one corner was covered by wrinkled blankets. A book lay open on the floor. The shade had been drawn and light streamed into the room, tinged with bright neon, flickering with the shadows on the walls.

Bevans went into the kitchenette. The food appeared to be nothing more than a simple meal of beef, corn, and fresh fruits. Bevans touched the trays, first one, then the other. Both were hot.

Abruptly, Bevans realized the precariousness of his position. Whoever lived here had not left for long. When they returned, he would be required to explain his presence. Legally he could be shot without warning as an intruder.

He turned to the door and left quickly, pausing only long enough to turn off the light.

In the hall, he found a darkened doorway and waited there, staring fixedly at the door. Five minutes went by—and ten. Nothing happened. The hallway was as empty and silent as an old tomb. Once Bevans tiptoed lightly down the hallway and put his ear against the door. For a moment he listened intently, straining, but heard nothing. He returned to his hiding place.

The desire to see people was still overwhelming. It had not been eased by the discovery that he was not alone on this floor.

But whoever these people were, they didn't seem in a hurry about returning home for dinner. Bevans was growing bored. Fifteen minutes passed, and twenty. He fidgeted. He would give them ten more minutes and then go.

The ten minutes passed slowly. Finally, he left his hiding place and went down the corridor. He passed his own room and kept going. He stopped at the elevator. It had been working now for a week. It waited for him, unused since he had returned from work and hour and a half ago.

He got into the elevator and pressed the button that said 49. The doors closed and the elevator rose, beginning the long climb. In the time he'd lived here Bevans had met only two other residents. Both of them—Thea and Potroi—lived on the top floor. He was going to go see them. He felt that he hadn't any choice. He had to see another human being, if only for one brief moment, for an exchange of common pleasantries. If he didn't, he would die.

The floors slipped past. *Thirty* and *forty*. *Forty-five* and *forty-six*.

#### *Forty-nine.*

The elevator stopped. The doors opened. Bevans glanced into the hallway, one finger touching the button that would send him back to the third floor. The hallway was empty. From where he stood, it looked the same as the third floor hall. The carpet was the same, unexceptional and worn. The doors were evenly spaced along both sides of the corridor. He had expected to see wonders up here. Trees and flowers. Paintings hanging from the hall. Baskets of gold and jewels. But there it was: a blue rug (with a small hole in it), white walls, yellow doors.

Bevans stepped from the elevator. He removed a coin from his pocket and used it to jam the doors. He wanted the elevator to stay where he could reach it

easily and quickly.

Different tactics would have to be used up here, he knew. He couldn't go merrily around knocking on doors and peeking inside. He needed a plan.

A reason was what he needed. A reason for being up here at all. He thought. A municipal maintenance man. That was it. He would pose as a municipal maintenance man. It was a weak excuse, but he could think of nothing better. If it worked and nothing else, he'd at least have the opportunity to exchange a few words with a servant. It would be talk, even if it concerned nothing more than sewage disposal, and talk was what he craved.

Quickly, before he could change his mind and run, he stepped to the nearest door and knocked authoritatively. He put his hands in his back pockets and tilted on his knees. He shuffled his feet. He knocked again.

No answer.

He reached for the knob, then quickly jerked his hand away. Unlike below, he knew people lived on this floor. He had to be cautious.

He turned away from this door and went to the next. His confidence was rapidly leaving him. He had only enough for two hesitant taps on the door. If this door went unanswered, he knew what he would do. He would run for the elevator, sprinting, he would hop aboard, and he would ride home to his room. The rest of the night he would spend cursing his own timidity.

He heard a voice.

Or something that sounded like a voice. It was incredibly weak, muffled.

He called out: "It's me—the municipal maintenance man."

The voice came again, much too weak to understand.

Bevans stood in the hallway, uncertain. He called out again but received no reply. He heard nothing at all.

At last he reached down and fumbled at the doorknob. It turned and the door opened. Bevans hastily said, "Maintenance man—may I come in?"

The voice, still weak, still muffled, said, "Yes."

Bevans went inside.

This room was another much like his own. If anything, it was smaller and more confining. There was only one room and no window. The room was nearly dark. A single dim electric fixture in the ceiling provided wavering light.

The only piece of furniture was a bed in the corner farthest from the door. The voice seemed to come from the bed.

Bevans shuffled forward. "I've come to check your garbage unit. There's been a complaint. Won't be a moment."

Bevans reached the bed and stopped. He peered down. The man who lay there was covered from mouth to toes by a thick blue quilt. Only the top of his head, his white hair, and his dark youthful eyes protruded into view.

"Potroi," Bevans said.

The quilt gently quivered. The voice was laughing. It said, "If you would give a tug..."

Bevans lowered the quilt so that Potroi's full face could be seen. The man was deathly pale.

"I thought you were a chief clerk, Bevans, not a maintenance man." Even

without the quilt, his voice was weak, his words marred by false beginnings and hesitant pauses.

Bevans shook his head.

"I assume she sent for you," Potroi said.

"Thea?"

"Not her. Of course not. Who's she?"

"Then, who?"

"Her. The big woman."

"I came here of my own will. I was lonely tonight, merely wanted some company. I don't know this woman."

"You will."

"I only want to talk," Bevans said.

"Then you've come to the wrong place, my friend. Better you should find a convenient graveyard. You see, that's where I'm heading."

"No," said Bevans, unable to think of anything else. But he was far from convinced of the accuracy of his statement. Potroi looked more closely dead than any live man he'd ever seen.

"See that," Potroi said. He jerked his head at the ceiling.

Bevans looked. Directly above the bed there was a hole, one big enough to permit the passage of a man. Past the hole lay a thick patch of darkness.

"What do you make of that?" Potroi asked.

"It's a hole," Bevans said.

"Oh, no. Close—but not quite. It's not a hole. It's an exit. An entrance. My private passage to the upper floor."

"This is the upper floor."

"This is number forty-nine. That leads to fifty."

Bevans shook his head.

"She lives up there."

"Who is she?"

"Marlen they call her."

"But who is she?"

Potroi chuckled. "You don't know? She's the one who called you up here. You ought to be ready for her now. Thea has had you for more than a week and Thea is a hungry woman."

"Oh," Bevans said. He wished he'd stayed at home now. Potroi was dying. Bevans found death distasteful.

"Ought to be ready," Potroi repeated weakly.

Bevans nodded as if he understood everything completely, then quickly he wheeled and stepped toward the door.

Potroi's arm emerged from beneath the quilt and caught Bevans's wrist. His grip was remarkably strong.

"Don't hurry away," Potroi said. "She'd be angry with you for that. And with me as well. Not that it matters in my case. I'm already a dead man. The last one here, the one before you, she was a lovely young girl, sixteen, seventeen, only a child. She had a soul like a flower, as calm and clear as water. I was told to care for her, and I did. Maybe I fell in love with her and maybe I didn't. No matter. I became greedy for her. Within a week, she couldn't move. I couldn't control myself. She was too lovely. I continued to feed. The girl died."

"You killed her?" Bevans tried to break free of Potroi, but his efforts were useless.

"Killed the woman I loved," Potroi said. "Afterward, for a time, I was fat and healthy. But then you arrived and Marlen said I could not have you. I came to you despite her and I fed. I was afraid of dying. Thea discovered me and I was taken to this room. Here to

die, starving, rotting, withering away like a spoiled apple, while the others live off you, consuming your soul, and you wander the streets all night, unable to find a home and unable to understand the void that is you, the emptiness that must be filled by the lives of others. It's a bad life, Bevans, and you're surely as dead as I am dead. You may not know it for a few more weeks, or months, but you will, and you will be dead."

"Yes," Bevans said, struggling.

"You approve of me?"

"No," Bevans said. "I do not."

From deep within Potroi's chest, from beneath the heavy quilt, a rasping rattling chuckle erupted. The chuckle became a cough and the cough became a sentence: "Now you have stumbled on me and I've told you everything. Marlen is too devious for her own well being. Now I needn't die so quickly. Now I can take you with me."

Potroi's grip tightened on Bevans's wrist. "Do you understand me?" he said.

Bevans shook his head and struggled to escape. He twisted and turned, trying to free his hand, trying to reach the door.

Abruptly he stopped his struggles.

On the bed Potroi began to rise in the air. The quilt went with him. Up and up he floated until he rested in the air two feet above the bed.

Bevans jumped at him.

Potroi had been holding him away from the door. But Bevans jumped in the opposite direction. With his free hand he found Potroi's throat. He pushed him down, squeezing.

Now Potroi struggled and screamed.

Bevans fell across him, holding him down on the bed, covering his face. Potroi's grip relaxed, loosened. His hand fell away. Bevans was free, but he continued to squeeze, pressing him deeper into the bed. Potroi was no longer struggling. He no longer moved.

Bevans moved away and regained his feet. He looked down at Potroi and removed the quilt from above him.

The old man was as pale as death itself.

Bevans touched his wrist. Potroi was dead.

Now he didn't know what he ought to do. He had murdered a man. In self-defense, to be sure, but how could he prove it? Who would believe him? Why was he even here, where he did not belong, forty-six floors from his home. Why had he come up here—except to rob, murder, and steal.

Bevans let his eyes stray to the roof. Potroi had mentioned a woman who lived up there. But could that part of his story have been true? It made little enough sense.

Bevans decided to find out. If there was a woman up there, if she had truly known Potroi well, then she might be able to confirm Bevans's story. It was worth a try.

He climbed on top of the bed and reached out with his hands. His fingers touched the edge of the hole. He pulled himself up and climbed through.

It was dark here, and dirty. The air was filled with thick musty dust. The only light emanated from the room below. Bevans fumbled with his hands. There appeared to be a passageway opening to his left. He turned and moved into it.

He was forced to crawl. There was barely enough room for that. His hands disturbed the dust that lay piled on the floor. It filtered into his nose and mouth. He choked on it. The floor slanted upward, but gently. He continued forward. Squirming, pulling. And always the dust. Worse and worse.

It seemed as if he'd come a very long distance. He stopped for a moment and turned his head. There was nothing behind him but total and utter darkness. He had passed beyond the faint light that had come through the hole. With a sigh, he went forward again, still climbing. The dust was unbearable. He stopped and removed a handkerchief from his pocket. He tied it over his lips and nostrils. Then forward again.

He had gone only a few feet when he was forced to halt again. This time he had heard something, a noise, coming from shortly ahead of him, a scurrying sound like that of a rat. But it hadn't been a rat. The noise was too loud for that.

Bevans lay in the darkness, listening, and heard the noise again. It seemed closer now, only a few feet away. And he recognized it. The noise was the same he'd heard earlier, down below, when he'd searched the rooms. An animal. A huge animal, moving easily on clawed feet.

Bevans froze and groped behind him. He had to return. If he continued ahead, the creature (whatever it was) would have him trapped. It had followed him all night, not moving until now when it had him trapped in a place where he could neither fight nor run.

His hand touched a wall.

Almost crying out, he fumbled.

There was a wall at his back and there seemed to be no way around it. Where had it come from? Why? How? Why?

Bevans began to count to himself. It was his way of calming himself. As he counted, he listened, but he did not hear the animal now.

He stopped counting. Perhaps the animal had gone. The wall at his back was still there. He hadn't any choice. He must continue forward if he wanted to escape. He strained his tired eyes peering into the darkness. It seemed almost as if—yes, it was there. A light. Directly ahead. No. A little to the left. A tiny but steady light cracking the darkness like a star in the night.

Bevans scrambled forward, scraping his knees, bruising his hands and elbows. The handkerchief fell off his face and he swallowed great mouthfuls of dust.

He reached the light.

It was a small hole about an inch in diameter in the wall of the passageway. A few feet ahead, another wall rose to block all forward progress. Bevans was trapped. The animal was nowhere to be seen. If it had really been there before, it was gone now.

Bevans put his lips to the hole and breathed deeply. Clean, fresh, cool, moist, sweet air flooded his starved lungs. He lay on his stomach, breathing.

Then, moving his lips away, he looked through the hole.

There was a room on the other side of the wall, one much like all the others, slightly larger perhaps.

There were two people in the room. Facing him, leaning against one wall with folded arms was Thea. Opposite

her, sitting on the floor, was another woman. She was big, massive, huge, and wore a long flowing black robe that nestled at her feet. Bevans could not see her face.

The two women were conversing but Bevans could not hear their words. He thought they were arguing. The big woman talked with her hands, swinging them over her head in ever widening loops. Bevans thought he heard Potroi's name spoken but he could not be sure. Maybe it was another man named Potroi, one not even distantly related to the one who lay dead below. But again, Bevans could not be sure. How many Potrois were there in the world? In the city?

The big woman got suddenly to her feet and wheeled. She seemed to be looking right at him and he ducked back. But—too late. She'd seen him.

Bevans looked behind and to the front. Nothing but walls. Nowhere to escape. Walls and walls and walls.

A voice—deep and loud and clear—reached his ears: "Come out of there, Bevans. Push the wall. It's a door."

Thea's voice.

Bevans moved his eye back to the peephole. The big woman was looking right at him. Thea stood beside her. Bevans did not move. He could not move.

The big woman came forward.

Bevans knew her now. Of course. This was the woman of whom Potroi had spoken. He'd given her a name. Marlen. Yes, that was it. The pieces were falling together.

Marlen came toward him. The sound of her feet against the hardwood floor made him chuckle with delight. The puzzle was nearly finished now, like a

master painting, all pieces in place.

As the woman came toward him, her claws scraped against the floor. Like a big cat moving stealthily forward, stalking.

Bevans, giggling, fell forward against the wall. It collapsed and he tumbled. He hit the floor and rolled. He lay there and watched the claws approach.

Bevans was holding his breath now. He had stopped giggling.

## V

DAYLIGHT TAPPED GENTLY against the window pane and Bevans opened his eyes. Six o'clock on a light and cheerful morning. Hurry, hurry, hurry; just a little bit late. Into the hall and down the corridor. The lounge, neat and clean and scrubbed. Wash and shave and brush.

Back to the room and his finest suit. Straightening his best and brightest tie. Back to the lounge, in front of the mirror, hair parted neatly in the middle. Spectacles adjusted on the nose.

And off.

Bevans felt good this morning. He felt well. There was no other way of putting it. Good, just good, his cares having fled before the force of one good night's rest. It had been a fine idea, it had, going immediately to bed after work. The morning had become something good and clean and awesome.

The sun was shining and beaming. It glistened against the metallic cleanliness of the Tower. As was his custom, Bevans paused on the walk to pay proper tribute to his home, all forty-nine floors, the roof and the basement. For a full minute, he stood there

looking and then, with a salute of military quality, he proceeded down the street.

Bevans had decided to walk to work this morning. It was much too lovely a day to waste by hurrying unnecessarily. He'd prefer working an extra hour, if required, rather than missing the soft warmth of the early morning wind. Bevans moved quickly down the street, but not hastily. There was no one else around and he felt as if this whole thing—the dawn, its warmth and crisp beauty—had been created for his convenience alone.

His step was brisk. A song dangled just below audibility, running like a river through his mind. When he reached a group of people, he smiled warmly at those he passed, nodded his head in greeting. A few smiled back. Most looked away. But toward them all Bevans felt only a warm regard, a feeling that should be shared by all members of the same and human race.

That is: until he reached the soldiers.

He saw the approaching procession long before it reached him. Several trucks were in the lead and behind them came the tanks and troops.

A man near Bevans said loudly, "They're home from the front. Beaten, like animals," but Bevans paid him no mind. He kept on moving, smiling and waving and passing. Such a kind and gentle morning. How great to be alive. He passed the trucks and waved at the uniformed drivers. He passed the huge and rumbling tanks.

And when the trucks had passed, and the tanks, Bevans reached the marching soldiers. Some were carrying wounded comrades in their arms. Others were

being dragged or carried in stretchers. Bevans stopped. He watched them pass, thinking. Then, in the middle of them, he couldn't stand it. He dropped to his knees. He grabbed his neck and squeezed. He screamed.

He was below ground, in a trench, and rats pattered past, moving in aimless circles. His stomach lay open like a cracked egg, his throat was a raw open sore, his arms were cold, freezing. At his side his brother lay, sliced neatly into two equal portions, like an old log. He talked to his brother but did not receive a reply.

*Bevans screamed.*

He was racing across the ground with the earth clawing at the sky and the ground turning like a wheel. Behind him the officer stood poised, his rifle raised, urging his men into battle. One man stopped, turned, shouted, wheeled. The officer shot him. The man's brains danced with the sun.

*Bevans screamed.*

He lay in hiding in the loft and watched through a peephole as the Green Invaders snooped and when they came near he burrowed into the hay like a rat and clutched his breath to his chest. One time he heard a scream and found that he just had to take a look. It was nothing much as a dozen of them stripped a woman, just a woman, and her son stood near. An officer handed the boy a stick of chocolate candy. The woman—the boy's mother—was neatly spread by four men, one on each limb. A fifth man came forward and sat on the woman's face. Two others came forward. The mother was speered, then turned. Then speered again. The two became four. Then six. And so on. After

the first moment, she did not scream again. The boy sucked.

*Bevans screamed.*

And one on one on one. The procession passed. Bevans stood at the front. Bevans stood late watch. Bevans was dead. Then alive. Bevans fucked and Bevans was fucked. A village woman who was tortured till she talked, then tortured some more until she didn't talk. A boy a girl a boy and a girl. A man a woman a man and a woman. A man/woman. A dog, wandering, observing human fate through the eyes of another race.

*Bevans screamed.*

And ran. Down an alley, pushing people out of his path. He leaped into a cab and collapsed against the seat.

"Where?" the driver asked politely.

"Anywhere," Bevans whispered.

"But—" the driver said "—where?"

"Toward town. I don't care. Just hurry."

The driver whipped his horse (Bevans groaning) and the animal trotted compliantly into the traffic stream.

Like all taxi drivers, this one felt that he had to talk: "Did you see those soldiers passing in parade? Brought back recollections of the fighting previous. In the last war, if your recollections are keen. Saw the boys and they've been chewed pretty damn miserable. And I was there, watching, waiting for a possible fare, which turned out to be you. I seen a man without his legs or his arms and a big hole where his gut should have been. Seen another with his tongue hanging out of his mouth, hanging clean down to his Adam's apple. Seen lots of refugees, as well. Invaders got twenty, twenty-five towns

along the border. Never get them out of there. Raping a lot, I hear, and slaughtering men and children. Eating babies. You hear that, but I say: it's war. If you think it's bad now, I say wait till the bombing starts. Got a bomb so big now it'll rip a whole block apart and turn it into rubble and meat. Fact."

Bevans told the driver to stop. He paid the man and ran around a corner, where he hailed another cab and directed the driver to an exact destination. All the time Bevans held his throat and concentrated on not-thinking. I don't want to think, Bevans thought. No God.

When he reached the office, Bevans felt noticeably better. It was nearly eight o'clock and the building hummed with the dull intensity of aimless activity. Bevans tucked his head against his chest and hurried to his desk. He sat, slumped, and folded his hands.

A voice said, "Bevans?"

Bevans grabbed a random handful of papers and quickly shuffled them. Then he looked up. But it wasn't a vice-president calling his name as a prelude to a scolding. It was the old timekeeper.

"Have a message for you, Bevans. President wants to see you."

"Mr. Alston does?"

"President wants to see you. Right away. Got your pass already made out."

Bevans took the yellow paper, studied it, saw that he was ten minutes late, and hurried to the stairs. He passed the secretary pool and was touched by the animation of their sensuous desires.

Mrs. Rutledge was not there. She

had been replaced by a trim young girl whose legs seemed to flow endlessly from beneath a tight and narrow skirt.

"You're Bevans."

"I am."

"Go right in. Mr. Lang has been waiting for you."

"Who?"

"Mr. Lang. You had better hurry." She crossed her legs and frowned at him. "He's been calling for you since six. You're late, you know."

"I know," Bevans said. He tapped on the door and entered the office which for thirty years had belonged to Mr. Alston.

There were five men in the room. Four were soldiers. There was a colonel, a major, and two sergeants. The fifth man was a small man in a well-cut suit. His smile seemed to slice his face neatly in half.

The civilian said, "Ah, so you're Bevans."

"I am."

"Sit down, please."

Bevans sat. "Is Mr. Alston—?"

"The word hasn't been officially circulated," the Colonel said, "but you have a right to know. Alston has been relieved of all duties here by the commission. Wartime emergency, you know."

"And I'm taking his place," the civilian said, beaming. "For the duration," he added. "Lang."

"Sir," said Bevans.

The little man went to his desk and grabbed a sheet of paper. It was an official looking document complete with watermark and seal. "I'm new here," Lang said, "and don't know the ropes as well as I should. Haven't had a

chance to get to know my people yet, either, including you. But this message says that you're to be removed from this building and—"

"Removed!" Bevans jumped to his feet.

One of the sergeants pushed him down.

Mr. Lang frowned at him. "If you'll allow me to finish, Bevans. . ."

"Certainly, sir. I'm sorry."

"Fine. Now, the commission has ordered you confined to your quarters. No more coming here to work. Stay home at all times. You're still employed here, as far as I can tell. I don't want you to think you've lost your job. In fact, I'll see that you're placed on official leave. That seems to cover it." Lang sat down. "Have any questions? All of this clear?"

"No," Bevans said firmly. "None of it is clear."

The Colonel cleared his throat. "I'm the one in charge of your overall quarantine, Bevans, and I'm afraid we're running a little behind schedule. If you'll please come with me—"

"Which commission is this?" Bevans demanded. He struggled to remain calm. "You mentioned a commission. I'd like to know which one."

The Colonel nodded to the Major. The Major nodded at the sergeants.

The sergeants stepped forward. Each took one of Bevans's shoulders and hauled him to his feet. They hustled him toward the door.

Bevans had begun to count. *Five—six—seven—eight—* He did not try to shake loose.

Lang reached grimly for the phone.

The secretary, gaping, uncrossed her

legs as Bevans was herded from the office.

Two miles away, the Tower beckoned.

SQUEEZED INTO A SPACE barely large enough to hold a cat, Bevans crouched and cowered beneath his bed.

The noises were all around him. Some above and some below; to the left and to the right. But it was those that were farthest away that frightened him most.

The explosions. The earth-shattering, gut-twisting, head-shaking explosions that rocked and rattled and bounced the Tower as if it were a pebble on the ground. And the bombs that zipped like bullets from the sky. These, too. And the bombs.

There were loudspeakers mounted on each street corner that broadcast the latest war news without interruption. But they did not ease Bevans's troubled mind as they implored: "Remain calm. This is only a minor desperation raid—" (and lasting all week!) "—which our forces are valiantly withstanding. All citizens are requested to find immediate shelter for the duration of the attack. Further news expected momentarily. Repeat. Remain calm. This is only a—"

A bomb struck near, drowning out the speaker, and when the noise was over, the voice was gone.

A direct hit, Bevans thought, and turned his mind to other noises.

There were people in the hallways. He'd lived in this room all week now. At first, the sergeants had stood watch at the door, bringing him food three times a day and maintaining his safety.

Then, twenty-four hours ago, the first aerial bombs had landed. He hadn't been fed since. He hadn't seen the sergeants. The other noises had commenced soon afterward. Voices and footsteps. Shouts and screams and muffled moans. He hadn't wanted to look. He was afraid, but he was also very hungry.

Another bomb landed. Close. Very close. The window above him shook and vibrated.

Bevans cowered. How could they keep missing? The Tower, dancing among the clouds, must offer an easy target to the fliers. Why didn't they just bomb it? And end this waiting? Why?

Another bomb. Another miss. The noise faded away and another sound took its place.

Knocking. Somebody was knocking at his door.

Bevans crawled more deeply beneath the bed and pressed his body against the wall. He buried his face in his hands. Who was it? The sergeants—with his dinner? No doubt. It had to be them. But what if it wasn't? What if it was someone else?

The door opened and Bevans froze. A pair of legs crossed the room, high heels tapping. The legs paused in front of the bed. They were trim and bare.

Bevans came out from under the bed and moved away from the window.

Thea was the visitor.

She said, "Bevans oh Bevans poor old Bevans. Are you afraid of the bombs? You needn't fear them. She protects this Tower. It cannot be hit."

Bevans relaxed a bit.

"You don't believe me," she said, and went to the window. "Come and

watch with me. The bombs come toward us, then suddenly, as if turned by the hand of God, they float gently away to strike here, there, elsewhere. But not on the Tower. We are safer here than the man in the moon."

Another bomb struck, missing. Bevans did not move.

He said, "What do you want, Thea? It was you who had me jailed here. I can't get away. I'm yours to use as you want."

"It's not me, Bevans."

"It's the woman."

"Marlen, yes. Then you remember?"

"It has come back to me. On the fiftieth floor. Yes, I remember it all now."

"I'm glad. It's better that way, easier. We should not have secrets between us. But there was Potroi—he caused trouble at first. Then you killed him. Marlen was glad of that."

"I'm glad," he said.

"I have an order here concerning you." She smiled reassuringly and reached into a pocket of her gown. Out came a legal-length official-looking document with watermark and seal. "It's a transfer order. You have been moved by direction of the commission."

"I can leave?"

Her smile was weak this time. "To the top floor."

"I won't go," Bevans said.

"But—darling—it's an order." She waved the document as though it were a flag. "From the commission itself. You can't just say *I won't go*. And your room is needed. Have you looked into the hall?"

"My guards are there."

"Not for hours." Her smile remained steadfastly intact. "Come and see."

Bevans went with her to the door. She opened it and stepped out of the way.

Bevans looked.

Bevans gasped. He fell to his knees, grabbed his throat, and screamed.

Thea slammed the door. She smiled down at him.

The hallway had been full. Of soldiers. The wounded. The maimed. The dead and the dying.

Bevans held his head. He began to cry.

"I'm sorry," Thea said. "I didn't realize. That you were so weak."

Bevans nodded. He wiped his face and got to his feet.

"Now do you see what I mean? You can't stay down here, Bevans. These floors are needed by the army. The enemy is only blocks from here. If you stay here, among them, you'll die from the pain."

Bevans shook his head. "Why are they here?" he asked.

"Why not? Where else? The Tower is large, unoccupied except—"

"And where else can you feed upon them? Where else can you find the sick and wounded? The weak?"

"They will die anyway," she said.

"Of course," he said. "That explains it."

"And you need them too, Bevans, or you will die."

"Then I'll die."

She laughed at him. "Easier said than done. You need them, Bevans, because Marlen has taken your soul and left you with an emptiness. Either you fill that emptiness with others or you

die. The choice is yours—if you feel there's a choice."

"I don't want to die," he said.

"No one does, Bevans. Marlen has taken from you, but not replaced. You must seek on your own now."

"And you're the same. And Potroi."

"Potroi was different. He was old—as old as Marlen nearly."

"But you? Why, Thea?"

"Ten years ago I was brought here as you were brought here in turn. A government order allowing me to make the move. I was a secretary and not a good one. I was poor, only one step above the Sunrise Community, so of course I came. I could hardly believe my good fortune. I took a room on this floor. And Potroi came to me. And Marlen. We were wedded, made three. We loved and died and we consumed."

"But why?"

"Why not? What else can I do?"

"Is it better than death?"

"Perhaps not," she said. She touched his hand tenderly. "That first night. Do you remember? When we walked together into the city and you saw the beggar boy. Do you remember?"

"Yes."

"The choice is gone now. You must come with me."

"Yes," he said.

"I will send them away. Wait here for me."

Thea slipped through the door. Bevans waited. Outside the bombs crashed into the earth, tearing it apart, taking man's handiwork with it. What man has made, man can destroy. Bevans had loved his country once, but now he did not care. Now that he knew the truth.

Thea returned and she told him it was safe. Together they rode the elevator. It took them up and up, softly, smoothly. She led him to the room where he'd killed Potroi.

"This will be yours," she said. They had paused at the door.

"Will you stay with me? For a while?"

"I'm sorry. We are all busy now."

"I understand," he said. He went into the room and closed the door. There was a new bed in the room, a folding cot like his. He sat on the edge of the cot. A week before, two weeks, living here, he would have cried for joy.

A bomb hit. A scraping noise. Another bomb. Another noise.

She was coming for him already. So soon. She hadn't even allowed him time to unpack his belongings. She must be hungry. That was it. Weak and famished. Her claws clacked weakly across the floor. Bevans watched the hole in the ceiling, waiting for her to descend. The noise grew louder, closer, louder.

He rose from the bed and turned off the lights. He felt his way through the darkness and returned to the bed. He lay on his back. He watched the dimly lit opening.

She was coming. Near and close and near. Coming. Claws scraped; claws clacked. And still she was coming. Hungry and ready.

Outside a bomb exploded and the room was buffeted with a savage roar.

She drew near.

Bevans closed his eyes. The light went away. Tightly. Waited. Waiting. His eyes.

BEVANS WOULD NOT EAT. Thea implored him and came to his room after a trip below, looking fat and healthy and glowing with good health. He felt he could see the blood on her lips, her throat. The flesh on her hands.

And each time Marlen came to him—more and more frequently, with less and less time for him to recover—a bit of him would die. Soon he refused to leave his bed. He would lie there for days at a time, listening to the falling bombs, listening to the exploding shells, closer and closer, and amid the bombs, he would hear her coming. Always the same: Scrape and patter and clack and claw. Approaching. He would shut his eyes, and clasp his ears so tightly that not even the largest and loudest bombs could penetrate, and he would wait. And when she left him, fat and full, he would be weaker than ever. He could not raise his hands to cover his eyes. He could not bear the noise. Outside he could sense the men standing guard around the Tower and thirty and forty floors below he could feel the wounded and dying as if they stood next to him. He could feel the pain and that was worst of all.

So, at last, weakly: "I'll go. I'll do it. I don't want to die."

Thea was happy. "I'm so glad. You don't know how lonely it is for me with only her for company. Now we shall be together."

"You'll have to help me," he said. "I cannot stand alone."

"Not now," she said. "We have to wait until it is late. I know what we'll do this time. Some of the bottom floors are being used now to hold enemy prisoners. We will visit them. They will

be better than our own wounded. They will be stronger and better nourished."

Bevans nodded and prepared to wait.

Waiting was impossible, now that he'd made up his mind. But it was, he knew, absolutely necessary. Only in the dim hours past midnight could they move safely through the building without fear of being accidentally observed. Marlen was strong, but not so strong as to hide their existence from the eyes of a thousand soldiers.

"It won't be easy this first time," Thea told him. "You're weak and they're strong. But you will have my help."

He thanked her.

At three o'clock, the city quiet, the Tower dark, the bombs silent, they moved.

They went to the escalator. The elevator was no longer operating. Thea helped him aboard and climbed on behind him. They descended. Bevans watched the steps. Black and white. Black and white. There was one step he had seen another time, half white and half black. He looked for it, peering below, but could not see.

The next floor and the ten below it were empty and quiet. Thea told him the prisoners were far down below. The newest and strongest would be found on the first three floors. So, they rode, descending.

After the twenty-fifth floor they began to see soldiers standing guard at each landing. But the soldiers always seemed to be turned away whenever they passed. They were never observed.

Bevans was weak. He gripped the guard rail and held tightly. Thea helped him at each landing, leading him care-

fully to the next flight. And down and down and down.

At the third floor, they paused.

Bevans smiled at its familiarity.

"This will be good," Thea said. "I came here last night."

Bevans nodded and allowed her to help him down the corridor. He tried to make his feet walk, but they refused to cooperate. He stumbled, tripped, nearly fell.

"Almost there," Thea said.

On the escalator with only a few guards for company, it hadn't been so bad. Bevans had easily closed his mind to all but a small portion of their feelings. He had tasted boredom and puzzlement, fear and anger. But all of it was weak; all of it was bearable.

But not here. Not here where dozens of men were confined in tiny rooms. They seemed to come to him all together, with their fear and hate, their hungers and desires. Hundreds of them, packed on this floor like animals, all demanding his love.

"Hurry," Bevans said.

Thea stopped and opened a door. She walked past a guard who did not see her and led Bevans into the room. It was small. With a kitchenette. A stove and a refrigerator. The stove was cold. The refrigerator was empty. The window was painted black.

"This will do," Thea said. She led Bevans forward to meet the men.

There were fifteen men in the room, sleeping, fifteen men in tattered battered prison gray. They were sleeping, and while they slept, they dreamed. Some dreamed sadly of friends and home, of lovers and wives and places long gone. Others were worse. They

dreamed of the fighting they had seen, of the men they'd been forced to kill.

Thea lowered Bevans to the floor and stepped away.

Bevans was flooded with faces. He lived in a world of faces without bodies. Some of the faces were missing their ears. Others had no eyes or mouths.

Thea whispered, "Here, this one."

It was not the one who'd dreamed of faces. Bevans was led toward the man. He closed his eyes. This one was dreaming of a girl—no, an old woman—who stood outside a white cottage and waved her tired hands at the sky as if she were calling the birds to come down. She danced in front of the cottage, her arms twirling and whirling. She spun, old woman, she kicked. She danced with her heels.

"Here is a good one. He's young and strong, untouched. Go to him."

"But—how? I don't know how."

"Concentrate. Let his thoughts become your thoughts. Let his senses be yours. It will work."

"Yes."

"Then go to him. Listen. He calls you. You can't refuse."

"Yes."

"Enter."

"Yes." Bevans willed himself to rise and to fall. He peered deeply and more deeply into the dreams of this man who lay before him. He studied the old woman who danced and whirled, her peasant skirts fluttering around her thighs, rising higher and higher with each kick. There was a brown mole on her right thigh. Above in the sky, the birds were crying gently, floating down, watching the woman, listening as she danced. The cottage was white—the

color as clear as glass—and the roof was brown shingle. Trees were green and whispering; the sky was free and blue. Bevans tasted salt and smelled the wet. The sea was near. Waving his hands, dancing, and he realized he was not calling the birds to come down. Instead it was they who were calling and he who was trying to rise, to join them, to go with them, to fly with them. Bevans danced and he watched the sea, crying aloud. Within the cottage a child cried, whimpered, cold and hungry.

Dancing, whirling, swirling, Bevans felt stronger and stronger. He went inside the cottage and a pot filled with meat and vegetables roasted above a hot fire. A boy was crouching in the dust and waving his hands at the warming flames.

And stronger now. So strong that Bevans took this world in his hands, molded it, made this world his own. He brought music to it, playing gently in the background, and brought the woman inside. She went to the boy and took him in her arms, holding him like a favorite toy, rocking and rocking. She touched his hair like flowers and kissed his brow like lace, rocking, rocking. Softly singing and her song was the same as the one that played.

"Enough."

"No."

"Come."

And he left. Against his will. The dream broke and fell like snow in the wind. Bevans was merely Bevans.

"That's it," Thea said.

"All?"

"We must go."

They left the room and the sleeping soldiers, resting undisturbed, and one

whose dreams had been broken never to be returned. In the morning the man would wake and he would feel the pain, but not understand, but the pain would go and he would dream again.

They rode the escalator, ascending, yes, to Bevans's room. Thea left him there.

Bevans stood inside the doorway. It was dark inside the room and he heard her there, her claws clacking with hunger. He nearly laughed aloud.

He went into the room.

BEVANS WAS FAT and well fed, happy and healthy, strong and fearless. Sometimes, late at night, he would even walk the streets now, entering the Sunrise Community and striding past the worst of the beggars to prove, only to prove that it could be done.

But time passed, as time always passes, and Bevans left the Tower less and less. He was stronger than ever—the prisoners came in an endless stream—but he no longer felt any need to leave. He'd prove himself to himself and that, after all, what what mattered.

Then the seige and the plague put an end to all this.

The invaders reached the outskirts of the city and waited, attempting to starve the army into complete surrender. Little news was heard any more and that which was allowed to circulate was riddled with obvious lies and falsehoods. But there was no mistaking what a man could see or hear. The bombing raids were increasingly savage. The shelling of the city never ceased, not even for a minute. And there was the plague.

It began in the Sunrise District, in

one of the auditoriums where beggars slept, but spread like fire, sweeping the city. Bevans would sit on his bed in his room on the forty-ninth floor and look out the window at the city below. Nothing moved. A few soldiers perhaps. But not many. And the death wagons. They were there, moving from house to house, street to street, gathering the dead like flowers from the earth. The bodies were taken to a great pit in the very center of the city and buried in a vast common grave. Some, the worst, were cremated and at times the city was covered by a thick blanket of soot and filth.

Thea came to him one day. He had seen her less and less often as time had passed. He was able to find his own prey now and did not need her assistance. This time she entered his room without bothering to announce herself. He turned to her with amazement. She was as thin as a rail, looking weak and starved. Bevans thought back. It had been a week since he'd last seen her. What had happened in so brief a time?

"It's done," she said, and started to fall. Bevans ran and caught her. He carried her across the room and placed her on the bed.

"The plague is over?" he said.

"No. Not the plague."

He sat on the floor at her side. "Then what?"

"The war is over. The enemy has attacked. Haven't you heard?"

"I've heard nothing I haven't heard for weeks."

"It's true. They've snapped our lines like twigs in a storm. The enemy is inside the city. They are everywhere."

"But here? They can never reach here."

"Not so long as Marlen lives," Thea said.

"And Marlen lives forever."

Thea laughed. "Such faith, Bevans, and so quickly you found it."

"But it's true. You told me yourself."

"Marlen will die when she dies. Like you, like me, she must consume to live, and when the food is gone, she will die the same way I am dying."

"No."

"You haven't noticed, Bevans. You haven't even noticed. The prisoners once filled forty floors of the Tower and now they are easily housed on the bottom ten. Many rooms are empty and the few prisoners left are weak, tired, dying. We haven't any food to keep them alive so that they can keep us alive. The government is gone. The army is going. And the people are dying from the plague. There isn't even enough left for both you and me, Bevans, and Marlen says you are the chosen one. I am the one who gets to die. But your turn will come. Soon the prisoners will all be dead and the invaders will circle the Tower and they will wait. They will wait for you to die and they will wait for Marlen to die. After her thousands and thousands of years, she will die and it will mean nothing, all those years, for dead is dead is dead."

Bevans shook his head weakly. How—? He was happy; he was fat. How—?

But outside he could now hear sounds that were different. The shelling had stopped suddenly. The bombs were no longer falling like rain from the sky. It

was quiet. He listened intently. There was a rifle shot. Another. And that was all. The silence had come.

Thea got out of the bed and went to the door. She paused in the doorway and turned slowly, her head swiveling. She said, "I thought you'd want to know, Bevans."

"Yes," he said. "Yes—thank you."

"It isn't your fault—or mine. We're only the pawns. It's something old, something that began before our grandfathers and their grandfathers, something that is finally coming to an end. There's nothing we can do to stop it or help it."

When she had gone, he returned to the window. He looked out and watched tiny figures, far below, racing through the streets, fighting and limping and ultimately dying. Bevans watched for a time, then turned away. It didn't matter to him. Even as entertainment, like a show, it failed to move him. Which side was which side was which and which was which was which? He didn't know. Enemy and friend. To Bevans it just did not matter.

BEVANS NEVER SAW Thea again, but once, several days after their final meeting, a death wagon came to the Tower. Watching from his window, Bevans saw the wagon pause and the driver climb out. The man disappeared inside the foyer and Bevans waited. When the man returned, he was carrying an object wrapped in a heavy gold quilt. The man placed the object tenderly in the back of his wagon and drove away.

Bevans was alone.

The enemy conquered the city with

the ease of experienced victors. The last place they came was the Tower. They began in the foyer and fought their way up, and up and up. Winning a floor, pushing her back as if she weren't there, and up. But she made her stand at last. And won. The enemy reached the forty-eighth floor but no farther. They stopped there. And waited.

The enemy had all the time they would need. They could wait, yes, for she could not live forever. She would weaken and she would starve and she would die. And Bevans? Bevans waited too. In old Potroi's room, alone, alone in a vast world.

At times Marlen would call for him and he would come to her and she would feed, and fat, satisfied, she would allow him to leave, and he would return to his room and fall into bed and die a little more.

Below him were soldiers by the hundreds and he lived each waking moment with them, touched by their joys and sorrows, their boredom and fatigue. Bevans lived with all of this and tried to sleep, but even that became harder and harder with each passing day. And then Marlen would call him and he would come and she would feed and he would die. Not yet, not quite yet, but soon and truly and then nothing.

Again, she called to him.

Hearing her, Bevans stood—and fell—and stood again. He made his way to a chair and climbed, squirming and twisting, and entered the cavity in the ceiling. He crawled slowly forward, hunched down like a rat, and came toward her lair. It was she who called him and it was she who gave him the strength to come, but Bevans did not

think of this.

He did not think of any of this because his mind was too full of other thoughts. There was a young soldier on the fourth floor who was having a tooth pulled and another man on the twenty-ninth floor with an infected leg. In the alley outside the Tower, a fat sergeant was running his hands over the tiny breasts of a girl not yet fourteen. The girl was frightened and interested. On the forty-seventh floor, a supreme general was worrying about death, and on the second floor, a private was astonished by the glories of human existence.

All of this flowed through Bevans's mind like an endless river, a river that returned on itself, and he did not think. He just crawled on ahead, a man who lived a thousand lives at one time, going to meet his Marlen, and squirming here and wriggling there, ignoring the fears of the dark.

He kicked the wall away (still not thinking) and fell into the room. His eyes saw (but his mind did not feel) the presence of her. She was lying on the floor, a quilt high on her chin, narrow as a post now, thin as an angel, white as a woman.

She told him to come to her and he did, feeling her fully now. Thin as she was, white as she was, old as she was, this was she, Marlen, and when she was hungry and wanting her food, she overwhelmed the rest, snuffed them out, became the all of the all. No one and no thing else. Just step forward, holding your hands to your sides, ready to do her will. This was the how.

Bevans stepped to her side and removed the blanket, so that she lay

(continued on page 110)

George R. R. Martin's first sale to us was the haunting "Exit to San Breta" (FANTASTIC, February, 1972); now he returns with a vividly detailed picture of life in the near future, when great space ships are plying the solar system, juggernauts devoid of romance to those who work them . . . except the kid on the—

## **NIGHT SHIFT**

# **GEORGE R. R. MARTIN**

**Illustrated by DAVE COCKRUM**

DENNISON FED HIS CARD into the office time clock, listened for the heavy thunk, and snatched the card back when the machine spat it out. He slid it into its slot among the other night crew cards, and walked through the office door out onto the loading dock.

It was like walking into a furnace. The office, a plastoid pimple on the face of the elevated circular dock, was air-conditioned. But the loading area itself was not. The concrete underfoot had taken plenty of punishment during hours under an August sun, and now it was getting its own with a vengeance.

Dennison had just begun a prayer for the souls of the poor bastards who had to work out here during the day when poor bastard foreman McAllister walked up and handed him a clipboard.

"Busy?" Dennison asked.

McAllister nodded. "Yeah," he said. "And you're gonna be busier. That

damn Y-324 is over an hour late. I'm not complaining, though. That puts it on your shift."

Dennison rifled through the papers on the clipboard, then glanced around the loading dock. Six of the ten berths along the rim of the great concrete circle were occupied. The squat, discolored spaceships formed an uneven, broken ring around the dock, their yawning freight ports almost obscured by the huge containers and stacked crates that clustered around each berth.

"How come P-22 isn't loaded yet?" Dennison said, flipping through the papers to find the right one. "It says here it's due out at six. That's an hour, Mac. And it can't be half loaded, by the looks of it."

McAllister shrugged. "One of the big Evans is out," he said. "Left us only two to work with. And those are fucking big containers going into P-22. The lit-

tle Evans can't handle 'em."

"Shit," said Dennison. "And, of course, the big Ivan hasn't been fixed yet. So that makes it my problem." He looked over at P-22 with disgust. "Shit," he repeated.

"Don't complain to me," McAllister said. "I didn't break the fucking Ivan. You night boys got it easy, anyhow. Start at five, just when it's getting cool. No boss to bitch at you from the office. Lighter traffic most of the time. You deserve a few problems once in awhile."

"Yeah. Right. Look, Mac, I was on days for years. Nights are no easier. And when I was on days I didn't leave any headaches for the night crew to take care of. I solved my own problems."

"So solve this one," McAllister said, turning towards the office. "Me, I'm going home for a beer."

Dennison followed him through the door, clipboard in hand. As usual, his crew was loitering around the small office, taking advantage of the air-conditioning until the last possible minute. That was in violation of company policy; dock workers were supposed to stay out of the office except on business. That was also routine; the station chief quit at five, and skeleton night office staff didn't give a damn.

McAllister frowned at the night shift, wove a path through them, and stepped into the elevator that would take him down into the underground garage. Dennison halted just inside the door.

"Alright," he announced. "We've got a broken big Ivan and a ship leaving in a hour, so we'll have to sweat tonight. Tony, Dirk, get the other two big Evans



going and shove those containers into P-22. Hi-Lo, I'll talk to you in a second."

He paused, flipped a page on the clipboard. "Get the little Evans to work unloading K-918," he continued. "Sweat crew get started loading K-490."

The men began to shuffle past him, out onto the loading dock. Dennison looked up from the clipboard. "And for Christ sake, check the ship numbers. I know they all look alike, but that's no excuse for unloading the wrong one."

A short, wizened black in a spotlessly clean coverall was the last in line. He paused before the door and looked expectantly at Dennison. "Well?" he said.

"I've only got two big Evans, Hi-Lo, but I've got three operators," Dennison said. "So I'm going to have to find something else for you to do."

The little man smiled. "I'm a little old for the sweat crew, don't you think? I'm pushing retirement age. Besides, I'm the best Ivan man you've got. Why don't you rest Tony?"

"I wasn't thinking of the sweat crew," the foreman replied. "I had something else in mind. We'll never get those containers aboard P-22 in time with only two Evans. But I think the company's still got some old fork lifts downstairs in the storage garage. Still know how to run one?"

"Shit, sure. That's why they call me Hi-Lo. Drove one for years before they even thought of the Ivan. Easy as hell."

"Alright," Dennison said. "Go down there and see if you can find one still in working order. A big one. Big enough to handle those containers for P-22. Then use one of the dock elevators to get it up here."

Hi-Lo nodded, and started towards the elevator. Halfway there he paused. "Gas," he said.

"What?"

"Gas. The old fork lifts worked on gas. No power cells like the Evans. Where do I gas it up?"

Dennison looked puzzled. He looked over at Marshall, the night dispatcher who was lounging in front of his computer console and listening to the whole conversation. "Marsh?" he asked.

The thin, antiseptic-looking dispatcher clucked thoughtfully. "Well," he said. "None of the port trucks use gas. But I think a couple client companies still have some old models in operation. Maybe he could borrow some." He waved vaguely. "Siphon it, or something."

"Our best chance," Dennison agreed. "We'll never make it with two big Evans alone. There should be some trucks down there now, picking up the stuff from K-918. Check with them for gas if you can find a decent fork lift."

Hi-Lo nodded again, and vanished into the elevator, leaving Dennison alone with the two office workers. The office looked empty, even with the supervisor's room darkened and locked up. The day staff was a lot bigger, so the desks and chairs far outnumbered the night personnel.

Marshall, the dispatcher, had turned his attention back to the master console of the office computer, and his fingers flew over the control studs with practiced ease. The night shift was really a headless operation, but Marshall was the boss if anyone was. Dennison merely took charge of loading and unloading. It was Marshall who kept

track of incoming and outgoing ships, who knew which cargo was to be transferred to another ship and which unloaded onto the elevators for the trucks waiting below, and who assigned incoming freight to the proper ship.

"What do we have coming in tonight?" Dennison asked Marshall as he watched the console over his shoulder.

The dispatcher never looked up. "Two ships. Y-324 is late, could come in any minute. And there's another one scheduled to come in at nine. P-22 is the only one leaving tonight, though, so it shouldn't be too tight. A couple others go out first thing in the morning."

"We'll have to finish those two tonight, then," Dennison said. He checked his clipboard to make sure he had the numbers right. "Alright."

He turned, and nodded absently in recognition towards the other office worker, a fat college kid with a soft, pink face who had been hired for the summer to prepare sky manifests and other papers. The kid had only been around for about a week, and Dennison kept forgetting his name. Getting a nod in return, the foreman went back out onto the loading dock.

The air still swam with the late afternoon heat, and the sun still burned down on the broad expanse of white concrete. The only shade in sight was in the shadow cast by the piled freight around each of the occupied ship berths.

Three of the berths were alive with activity. Alive, but hardly humming. Nobody worked very hard until the sun went down in weather like this.

Including Dennison.

The foreman drifted over to berth four, where a dozen little Ivans were rapidly emptying K-918. The squat gray machines lumbered in and out of the open hold on tank-like treads, lifting and carrying the cargo containers with tractor beams. They were stacking it on a dock elevator, a concrete slab that would later descend to surface level and the waiting trucks with the unloaded freight.

Dennison watched for a few minutes, barked orders to keep things moving quickly, and bitched at one Ivan operator who collided with the stack of containers. But the job was almost finished. The day crew had already sent down several loads. Dennison checked his clipboard.

"This tub leaves tomorrow morning," he said. "When you've got it empty, send the load downstairs. Then break open K-06 and move the stuff over here for transhipment."

He headed over towards berth six, detouring around the large black chasm left by a descending dock elevator. Things were going less well over here. The two big Ivans were massive creatures, tank-like in size as well as appearance. But the pre-sealed metal containers that were awaiting loading were equally imposing. Even drawing on their reserve power cells to push the tractor beams to max power, the Ivans could handle only one at a time.

Dennison studied the situation for only a second before giving up on the half-formed idea of setting the little Ivans to work on P-22 in teams. It would never work, he decided. Several light tractor beams *did not* have the

power of one heavy-duty one, simply because it was difficult to coordinate them. To be at all effective, paired tractors had to lift at the same time and yank in the same direction. With two, maybe that could be worked out. With six, chaos. And containers of this size and weight would require at least six little Ivans.

Tony and Dirk were pushing their machines as hard as possible, but there was no way they were going to make it. The load was just too big. Dennison shrugged mentally, and moved on.

Berth one was directly opposite six on the circular loading dock, so Dennison had to walk across half of the loading area to get there. The sweat crew, as usual, was goofing off.

The cargo stacked up in front of K-490 was a potpourri. There was a mountain of small wooden crates, a couple of mail bags, a lot of heavy trunks, and a chaotic pile of packages of widely differing sizes and shapes. The contents of the crates and packages varied just as widely, Dennison knew, and included everything from personal effects to single shipments of a household appliance.

It was cargoes like this that kept the sweat crews in business—freight too small, too light, and too varied for the Ivans to handle economically. Containerization had vastly decreased the need for unskilled labor, but it had not eliminated it. Sweaters were still cheaper and more efficient than Ivans for this sort of thing.

"Cirelli," Dennison shouted as he walked up to the hold. The man jumped, and nearly knocked over the crate he'd been sitting on.

"Get off your ass," the foreman continued. "This ship has to be loaded by morning."

"Uh—yeah, sorry," Cirelli said. He picked up a crate and started towards the ship. Several of his fellow workers popped out of crannies in the mazelike stack of crates, each loaded down with several boxes. Dennison pondered briefly how many boxes they'd been carrying before he shouted.

As Cirelli entered the ship cargo hold, another man exited. He walked towards Dennison, lifted one of the crates near where the foreman was standing, and turned back towards the ship. Then he paused, looked back, and grinned.

"Say—uh, what's in these things?" he asked.

Dennison checked the shipment number stenciled on the crate, and looked down at his clipboard. "Something called Corn Crunchers," he said. "Sounds like a snack or something."

The other man grinned again. "Sure does," he said. He walked off and vanished into the hold.

Seconds later, there was the sound of wood protesting and breaking. A head popped out of the hold. "Say, boss, I dropped that crate. Stupid. It's broken open all over the place." He grinned.

Dennison returned the grin. "Careless, aren't you?" he said. "Well, we can't ship it loose. Give each of the men a couple boxes, and open the rest and eat 'em here. And put aside a box or two for me."

The man nodded, and Dennison turned and headed back towards berth six and problem ship P-22. Even less progress was being made than he had

hoped. He shook his head grimly, told Tony to speed it up, and moved on.

Work on K-918 was all but finished, so Dennison sent half of the little Ivans over to berth two to open up K-06 and start lugging its cargo over to the empty ship. While he was watching the others unload the last few containers, the Ivan operator who had been involved in the earlier collision managed to do it again. This time a whole stack of small containers collapsed on top of the Ivan.

Dennison got there just in time to nearly get run over by the Ivan when it emerged from beneath the pile. The plastoid control bubble had kept the driver from injury, but he was shaken.

Dennison lifted the bubble and shook him some more. "Who the hell told you you could drive an Ivan?" he finally said, when his string of obscenities had sputtered to a halt. "He was a damn liar, whoever he was."

The driver, a sullen youth of about twenty, climbed out of the cab. "I only got promoted from the sweat gang two weeks ago," he protested.

"You just got de-promoted," Dennison said. "Get over to berth one. I'll give you another crack at it when I've got some time to watch you, but tonight I'm too busy."

The youth glared at him, shrugged, and stalked off. Dennison climbed into the Ivan, stashed his clipboard alongside the seat, yanked down the bubble, and swung the machine back into action.

On his third trip back from the hold, he nearly had a collision himself. He was lifting a container atop a crooked stack with his tractors when a ear-splitting, coughing roar sounded somewhere

behind him. The sudden noise startled him. The container jiggled a little in mid-air, and the pile began to lean.

But Dennison recovered quickly. He shoved the pile back in place with his beam, and placed his container neatly on top. Then he guided the little Ivan down the narrow canyon between two large stacks of containers, out into the open. He stopped and climbed out.

Hi-Lo had found his fork lift.

The old machine was roaring and belching and running in circles in front of P-22, with Hi-Lo perched on top grinning like an idiot. It was huge. It didn't have the width or weight of the squat big Ivans, but it was higher. The big tires, nearly treadless, were an imposing sight themselves. The fork on front of the battered yellow monster looked almost large enough to pick up a big Ivan *and* its load.

Nearly all work had ground to a halt on the loading dock, and a crowd of enthusiastic spectators was forming around P-22. The old fork lift was a fascinatingly ramshackle piece of machinery, and the men took turns shouting caustic comments and advice to Hi-Lo.

Dennison, smiling in spite of himself, drifted over and elbowed his way through the crowd. "Alright, back to work," he shouted. Hi-Lo braked the machine to a sudden halt, and the men began to wander off.

Dennison kicked one of the tires, and shook his head. "Christ," he said. "I never knew they made these things so fucking big."

Hi-Lo was fingering the steering wheel lovingly. "Sure," he replied. "They didn't have tractor beams, so

they had to have size instead. This was a heavy-duty model. Used for outdoor work, mostly. Not nearly as common as the little jobs they used inside warehouses. But it should do the job for us."

Dennison ran his hand along the body of the machine, and dry flakes of dirty yellow paint peeled off and fluttered to the ground. "I hope so," he said. "Does the fork work? The muffler sure as hell doesn't."

Hi-Lo grinned and pulled at a lever mounted on the floor of the cab. There was a squeal of protest, but the lift tilted and the fork began to move up. "It works okay. Only one thing."

"What's that?"

"These things were built to work with pallets. The fork has to slide underneath a container before it can lift it."

Dennison nodded, and turned to look around. He gestured, and a little Ivan came rumbling over from berth four. Dennison told the driver what he wanted, and the man nodded and moved the small machine forward slowly.

Its tractor beam reached out, took hold, and yanked. One of the big P-22 containers rose awkwardly on one side. It rose less than a foot, and hung there tilted, but that was enough.

Hi-Lo grinned again and slammed the fork lift into reverse. It backed up a few feet, and halted, then tilted its forks forward like a bull lowering its horns and moved slowly towards the container. The forks slid neatly in underneath the container, and the lift tilted back. The little Ivan released its tractor. Hi-Lo hit his lever again, and

the forks began to rise, lifting the heavy container into the air.

"Good enough," said Dennison with a smile. "Charlie, you stay here and work with Hi-Lo," he told the Ivan operator. The man nodded. Hi-Lo gunned his machine forward with a roar and careened towards the freight hold, the container wobbling in its forks.

Dennison walked back to the little Ivan he had been running, got his clipboard, then headed over to K-490 and assigned a sweater to take over the machine for the rest of the night. He watched the man for awhile until he was certain that this guy really did know how to drive. Finally satisfied, he went back to the office.

The air-conditioning was nice, since it was still hot outside and he was starting to work up a sweat. The sun was sinking, but not yet sunk.

There was a third man in the office, sitting on top of a desk and drinking a mug of coffee. His coverall was sky blue instead of loading crew gray. A driver. Dennison knew him from previous stops. He nodded politely, and headed for the water cooler.

"I'm due out in fifteen minutes," the man said, looking at his watch. "Gonna be on time?"

Dennison shook his head. "No way," he said. He paused, drained a cup of water, refilled it, and drained it again. "We've got three loaders on it now, so that will speed things up a little. But you'll still be late. Forty-five minutes. Maybe an hour."

"Damn," the man said. But he didn't appear too concerned. He sipped at his coffee slowly.

The college kid in the corner looked

up from his manifests with interest. "Where are you headed?" he asked.

"The Belt," the driver said. "Ceres, then a couple of other stops."

"What's the cargo?" the kid asked.

"Uh—mining machinery, I think. Something like that. Isn't that right, Denny?"

Dennison checked his clipboard. "Yeah," he said.

The driver nodded. "With the Belt, it's always mining machinery. What the hell else would they send out there?"

"Well, a lot of things," the kid said. "I've been watching the manifests, sort of, since I started on Monday. It's interesting. You'd be surprised at some of the stuff they ship out. On Tuesday, there was a lot of portable heaters for the Mercury Research Station. Can you imagine that? *Heaters! For Mercury!*" He laughed.

The driver didn't seem to think it was funny, and looked at the kid strangely. Then he turned back to Dennison.

"Well, tell your boys to hustle," he said. "I've got a four-day haul ahead of me, and I don't want to take any longer than I have to."

The kid was shuffling through his manifests again. "Four days," he said, without looking up. "Must be fascinating work," he continued. "Alone out there, you and your ship and the stars and millions of miles of space."

The driver climbed off the desk and finished his coffee. "It's a living," he said. He walked past Dennison out onto the loading dock.

Marshall, who had been tending his computer oblivious of the conversation, finally looked up from his console. "Close out the manifest on P-22,

Greg," he said to the kid.

The kid looked up, and nodded assent. "Easy," he said, picking up a couple of the cards on the desk before him and stuffing them into a manifest folder. "There's nothing to these big unit-shipments. It's the assorted freight loads that foul me up."

He gestured towards a chaotic pile of cards before him, and Dennison smiled in sympathy. A small package of chocolates demanded just as much paperwork as twelve tons of mining machinery, so the same mixed cargoes that provided work for the sweat crews were the office man's nightmare.

"Those for K-490?" Dennison asked, nodding towards the cards.

"They're for the Mars freighter," the kid replied. "I forget the number. It stops at Bradbury and Burroughs City. Carrying all sorts of junk."

Dennison looked at his clipboard. "Yeah," he said. "K-490 is headed out to Mars. Same ship."

Marshall was staring across the room at the kid, looking annoyed. "How could you forget the *number*?" he said. "The number's what's *important*. No wonder you're so slow, if you're going through the manifests looking to see where the ships are *going*."

He got up from his console, and minced across the room, frowning. Standing over the kid, he jabbed at the top of one of the cards with his finger. "Look, I showed you how to do it on Monday. Each card represents a shipment. Just look up *here*—" his finger jabbed "—for a number. That'll tell you what ship it goes on. If there's no number, look *here*"—jab again—"or *here*"—again. "In that order. You

fouled up enough on Tuesday because you looked in the wrong places. Separated two manifests from their cargoes. God knows the foul-ups that will cause. After you separate them by ship, use the console to check for weight and times and payment."

He went on and on. The kid stared down at the cards morosely, his face screwed up with a martyr's expression. Dennison wandered back outside.

It was starting to get a little cooler. The mountain of containers waiting to be loaded on P-22 was shrinking visibly with the rumbling big Ivans and roaring fork lift at work on it, but it would still be awhile before the ship could be sealed up and moved out across the port for takeoff. The little Ivans, meanwhile, were moving the cargo from K-06 over to K-918.

Dennison picked up the visiphone mounted outside the office and punched port control. Marshall, of course, had already arranged for a takeoff slot for P-22, but Dennison had to order the spaceport's monstrous super Ivans that would haul the ship out to the landing field with their giant tractor beams.

He made the necessary arrangements, then chatted briefly with the freight port's night supervisor. It was a little after six when he rang off and walked over to K-490 to wake up the sweat crew again. Small cellophane bags of Corn Crunchers were everywhere, full, half-full, and empty, and the concrete was littered with the remains of stray Crunchers that had been crushed underfoot.

Dennison caught Cirelli loafing again and bawled him out, then set aside his clipboard and lugged crates with the

sweaters for awhile. A makeshift bowl, full of Corn Crunchers, had been rigged just inside the hold, and the men snatched handfuls as they went back and forth. Dennison decided the snacks were a bit too salty, but otherwise pretty good.

He quit about a quarter to seven and resumed his rounds. Work on P-22 was near completion. Only a few more containers awaited loading. The driver was standing by impatiently, his manifests in hand, while the big Ivans and Hi-Lo's fork lift shoved the last freight aboard. Down below, on surface level, Dennison could hear the growl of the port superIvans, standing by to lug the freighter out for takeoff.

The foreman studied his clipboard, flipping back and forth between papers. There was nothing urgent until Y-324 came in, so he could use the big Ivans for whatever he pleased. Probably best to use one to help the little Ivans load K-918, just to make sure that was wrapped up and sealed away by morning. The other big Ivan and the fork-lift he could set to work unloading D-3 over at berth ten, and lugging the freight over to the vacant berth five. That was no rush job; the ship the freight was to be transferred to wasn't due in until after the weekend. But it would keep them busy until Y-324 arrived.

Satisfied, he shouted orders to Dirk, Tony, and Hi-Lo, and watched while P-22 was sealed up and towed off. Then he drifted on to K-918, commandeered a little Ivan, and began shuttling containers back and forth between berth two and berth four. He hardly noticed P-22 when it finally took off, its

flame mingling with the sunset, an hour and ten minutes late.

It was a little after eight, dark and growing darker, when he pulled himself from the cab of the Ivan and bellowed orders to his crew to break for lunch. There was a buzzer that was supposed to sound to announce lunch and quitting time. But it had been acting peculiar for several weeks now.

"I'm making the run down to Talbott's tonight," Hi-Lo said after he climbed down from his fork-lift. His once-immaculate coverall was stained with grease and covered with sweat. "You want something? Burger? Beer?"

Dennison shook his head. "Nah," he said. "Brought my lunch with me." He smiled. "And I'm not supposed to know about the beers, remember? It's against company policy."

"Oh, yeah," Hi-Lo said. He put on a shocked look, vastly exaggerated. "What beers are you talking about, boss?" Then he grinned and stalked off to the elevators.

On the way back to the office, Dennison stopped to turn on the dock night lamps. Marshall was already eating when he got inside, but the kid was nowhere to be seen. Dennison dug his hotbox out of the desk drawer where he had stashed it. "Where's the kid?" he asked Marshall idly. "What is his name. Greg, or whatever."

"Greg Masetti," Marshall supplied helpfully. He waved towards the door vaguely. "He's eating out there somewhere. God knows why. The kid doesn't know it, but this is his last night."

Dennison had unsealed his hotbox and was chewing thoughtfully on a

roast beef sandwich, dripping hot barbecue sauce. He paused between bites. "His last night? He just started Monday. That's only a week, hell. Give him a chance."

Marshall shook his head. "Look, we've got a new station chief, and he's determined to make this place more efficient. So I can't fool around. The job's not tough, but God, this kid. All he does is daydream. He's too slow. And when I try to speed him up he makes mistakes. No, he's got to go. There's plenty of people looking for summer jobs. We'll get someone new on Monday. Someone better."

Dennison finished the sandwich, started another, and nibbled from a bag of hot fried onion rings. "Have you told him?" he asked.

"No," said Marshall. "Not going to, either. He might get mad and walk out or something. I'll phone him Monday morning, before he comes in. Tell him business has slowed down and we can't afford him."

Dennison scowled, but said nothing. He polished off the sandwich and onion rings, then drained two plastic cartons of chocolate milk, before he crumpled up the disposable hotbox and wandered back outside.

Hi-Lo had just returned, so most of the crew was only starting lunch. A few of them, however, had brought their food with them, and were finished already. Some of them were gathered around the office, pitching tenured coins against the wall. Others were sprawled out on crates and containers, half-asleep.

Dennison found the kid sitting on the edge of the dock at berth six, alone, his

legs hanging over into emptiness. The half-eaten remains of an unappetizing gray synwich lay alongside him.

The foreman stooped and picked up the plastic wrapper. "It's SYNfully delicious," he read, laughing. "Christ, kid, how can you eat this stuff?"

The fat kid gestured at the synwich remains, and smiled faintly. "I can't," he said. "That's the problem." His eyes wandered back out across the spaceport.

"This is sort of an interesting job," he said after a long silence. "The manifests are tedious, but I kind of enjoy working around the ships. There's a romance there, a mystery sort of. You know what I mean?"

Dennison frowned. "No," he said. "Can't say that I do. I never really thought of this place as particularly exciting. It's a job. A drudge. Sweat and oil and crates and paper. That's all."

The kid looked at him curiously, then turned back to the spaceport. "I think you underrate the place. You're at the crossroads of the solar system here. Ships coming and going every day, from all the far, distant places most people never get to see. Long, cold hauls between the planets. Cargoes both exotic and humdrum, going out to men all over the system for dozens of different purposes. There are a lot of stories here, I think."

Dennison shook his head, smiling. "You've been reading too many books at college, kid. This is a dull, dead-end job for guys like me who couldn't cut it. There's nothing exciting or adventurous or romantic about it. That's all in your head. Space itself is just tedium.

Ask the drivers."

"Tedium? Hardly. The ultimate adventure, I'd say. Lonely, maybe. But there's a romance in loneliness too, if it's the right kind of loneliness. Your ships are the galleons of the 21st century, and the freight runs are the equivalent of a modern Spanish Main."

"Galleons—" Dennison mused. He grinned. It was an odd, incongruous thought. "No, I'll tell you what the ships are. They're the—"

Across the spaceport there was a booming roar, and a thin pillar of fire lit the night sky in the distance. Atop the flames, slowly descending, was a squat black cigar shape.

Dennison and the kid spoke almost simultaneously.

"Titan," the kid said. "The Titan freighter."

"Y-324," Dennison said. "Almost four goddamn hours late."

Then the mischievous buzzer buzzed, and Dennison checked his watch, and it was time to go back to work. He strode off towards to office to find his clipboard. The kid lingered on the dock for a few minutes, watching as the Titan freighter settled to earth and the superIvans moved in around it.

The three hours to quitting time were hectic ones. Y-324 was badly behind schedule on its run from Titan to Venus Station, and there was a fleet of trucks down below waiting impatiently for its cargo, as well as a consignment for Venus that had to be loaded. So Dennison set everything—big Ivans, little Ivans, and fork-lift—at work on it as soon as the superIvans moved it into berth seven. The sweat crew he kept on K-490, however; they'd only be in the

way with a containerized cargo.

As soon as the ship was berthed and unsealed, the driver came stalking out, swearing a blue streak with a thick Martian accent.

"Shit! Shit!" he told Dennison when he had calmed down a little. "That ship's a flying shit-pile. A wreck. A death-trap. It's been acting up all the way from Titan. I'll be damned if I'm going to move it another foot until some repairs are made. I'm not *about* to push that shit pile on to Venus the way it is."

Dennison shrugged, and continued with his loading. The driver strode into the office and repeated his declarations to Marshall. Marshall didn't raise his voice. The dispatcher simply pointed out that Y-324 was already behind schedule, and that the driver would be fired if he didn't finish the run. The ship could be examined on Venus.

It was a heroic feat to get Y-324 emptied and reloaded before the quitting buzzer sounded at midnight. Especially since another ship came in less than a half-hour later. But Dennison managed it somehow. The ship and its penitent driver took off at a quarter to twelve.

The sweat crew, meanwhile, had finished and sealed K-490, and were set to work unloading the newcomer in berth nine. After Y-324 left, Dennison moved the Ivans back over to finish loading K-918. They had to run about a half-hour overtime to do it, but they managed that one too, and sealed it up for a morning takeoff before leaving.

Dennison hit the office water cooler while they were sealing it up. Marshall, finished for the night, lounged against his console and looked bored, waiting

to lock up. The kid was still working feverishly. The rush to prepare a manifest for Y-324 had put him way behind, and he still didn't have complete papers ready for the two morning departures.

When K-918 was wrapped up, the night crew began to drift into the office, one by one, to punch out and head for the elevator. Hi-Lo was the last of them.

"Uh, what should I do with the fork lift?" he asked Dennison when he entered the office. "Take it back below? Or leave it there?"

"Leave it," Dennison replied. "We'll use it until the big Ivan gets fixed. Besides, McAllister won't have anybody who can run it, and it'll bug the hell out of him."

Hi-Lo laughed. "Right," he called back, as he vanished into the elevator.

Dennison went back outside, doused the lights, and punched out himself. The kid had just finished the manifest for K-490. Marshall was rattling his keys impatiently.

"Got a ride?" Dennison asked the kid.

"Uh—no. I take the tubes."

"Don't run to often this time of night. C'mon, I'll take you home," Dennison said, turning to wave goodbye to Marshall. "See you, Marsh. Take it easy."

The kid muttered thanks, and they entered the elevator together, shooting down to the underground garage and the expressway buried beneath the spaceport. On the way to the kid's house, Dennison asked polite, stupid questions about the kid's college and course. He thought of telling him that tonight was his last, but the idea was

(continued on page 83)

*It was a matter of racial survival—of life or death—to cross the bridge of the universe to Earth. Everything depended upon the—*

# LINK

## JOHN RANKINE

Illustrated by **BILLY GRAHAM**

**I**N THE QUIET observatory at the summit of the ziggurat of Skiron, the watcher checked records as the glowing green light on his monitor focussed attention on the special significance of the stellar plot. The data was way back. Frames flicked through a centimetre square eye for some minutes, before the green light cut out and the small aperture was steady. He took the symbol reference it gave and dialed for the full score. His long, sensitive, yellow fingers rested on the sensors and, soundlessly, he was brought up to date.

The archives went on at length. In the background of his mind, there was an induced picture of the distant planet Earth, with its small satellite. Against this backdrop was a parade of information, most of it distasteful. Even the garish colouring of the place was offensive. Humid, water logged, peopled by aesthetically revolting, pale slugs, it had no attractions for him. But it was likely to be the new home for his race.

Of that there could be no doubt.

Sophax left the console and moved to the long window which filled one wall of the observatory. The yellow jointed bones of his feet made only a slight clicking noise on the deep foam carpeting. There was a long vista of golden sand. Flat, windless, without vegetation. The only break in the line of the horizon was where the distant ziggurat of Misus thrust out into the pale turquoise sky, its outline a concertina shimmer in the baking heat. The planet was burning up. Even the honeycomb of cities and workshops below the plain could not survive. One major breakdown or energy failure would spell the beginning of the end.

This moment had been expected for centuries now. Everything was ready. Only the place had not been known. Mathematicians had drawn it out to the last cypher and the observatories were geared to look out for the signs when Chrysaor approached the threshold of

that critical point in its complex orbit. A line up of forces, was approaching, which would set up unique conditions in the galaxy. Conditions which would create what was literally a loophole for the doomed race. Now it was becoming plain and it was Earth which was to come close by this freak bend in the space time continuum.

He stood before a long mirror recessed in the wall and looked complacently at his own reflection. Tall, even for a Crysothemite, he was two and a half metres from the bare bones of his heels to the shining, offset, ovoid head. The smooth, hard carapace of his body was unblemished golden yellow. Breathing gills ran across the top of his chest with perfect regularity and symmetry. The mathematically perfect oval of the face was scarcely broken by two triangular eye slits and a short line of deeper yellow which marks the closed mouth. He pressed a number of controls in the panel beside the screen. His image slowly dissolved, clouded pink and white, then shaded back to yellow. As it cleared, the picture of an older being looked back at him.

They began to communicate, without speech, by a diffused sensitivity. The shorter figure was Tylon, a rising member of the Governing Junta.

Sophax said, "The time we have been waiting for is almost here. Our planet has entered the ellipse which brings it on its last orbit."

"Everything is ready. How long do we have?"

"It is calculated that the link will open in about a week's time. It will stay open for a few days. It is not possible to be exact on this."



"That will be long enough to transfer the numbers we need. Let us hope your information is correct."

This was a plain statement, but Sophax was aware of the penalty for error. If any part of his advice proved wrong, he would not live to be bothered by the planet's suicidal course.

Tylon went on, "The cumulative report on the planet Earth can be finalized as of now. I want the full picture, state of technology, organization of society, forces in the area of our beach head. You have three days."

Sophax waited. Protocol demanded that the higher rank ended the conversation by operating the fade out. The screen clouded and he returned to the console. Stubbing a number of check keys, he brought in the section of records he needed and then sat like a carved figure in polished yellow stone as the account was communicated to him.

It seemed that the grotesque hominids on Earth had made progress in science and technology. They had even mounted some rudimentary space explorations, which had taken them to the limits of their own solar system. Then there had been a check. The record showed that there had been a frenzied period of sexual activity with unusual promiscuity and a fantastic explosion of population. A kind of race re-crudescence. Then there was a long period of near sterility and the species was numerically much reduced. Great areas were depopulated. It was as though the genetic main spring had been overwound and was now strained and weak. It was as well that it should be so. They were hardly worth preserving.

Sophax paused at a representative picture of an Earth type. He played it on the main crystal and the whole of one wall was filled with a blown up image. It seemed incredible that such a creature could have survived and developed for half a million years. Its exterior had a soft pulpy look, like a ripe fruit. The notes running beside the diagram told him that the skeletal frame was in the centre and that the protruberances on the lumpy looking head were associated with specific functions like communication in and out and breathing. A rear view of the same model had more satisfyingly simple lines. Fine strands of yellow fibre, labelled 'hair', fell in a bell like curve from the top of the head to the shoulders. Indeed the whole form, from this aspect, could be a decorative baroque motif.

It was another hour before the record came up with the information which he recognized as the key to guarantee their venture. He had gone rapidly across continent after continent in a search for the most advantageous site. Stored up resources of tremendous energy were ready to break through the final barrier and establish the link; but the right choice of locale could make a great deal of difference to success. Here was a wide plain, near the centre of a small island which itself lay off a principal land mass. It was strategically sound. Placed, ideally, away from any large centre of population. They could consolidate before the threat of their presence was known. Moreover it contained one of the Earthmen's most advanced pieces of technology, an astronomical radio telescope with a vast

paraboloidal bowl which would be a ready made receiver. He blew up the district map and picked out the place name. It was Jodrell Bank.

FIVE DAYS of intensive effort prepared Sophax for his report to the Junta. He knew that in the honeycomb of administration buildings there had been incessant work since he had given the warning. If he was wrong, he would not survive the discovery of his error. But he knew that he was not wrong.

A secretary robot glowed and transmitted a reminder that he should leave for his appointment. He went across to his private elevator and looked back at the sellar map which now filled the opaque wall. As the yellow metal grille came down it chopped up the saucer shaped galaxy into discreet squares. Sweeping down from Chrysaor on the periphery to the small solar system which contained Earth, there was a vibrant mauve line. It remained behind in his staring triangular eyes, as a strong eidetic image, when the cage dropped him swiftly below ground to the service tunnel level.

At the bottom, he stepped out into a white corridor, clinically clean, carpeted as everything was in thick, soft foam. Suspended from the roof, a monorail shuttle waited for him. It took him at high speed to a great circular clearing, rising to the terminus in the centre of a lofty dome. Here a mobile elevator gantry slipped alongside to take him down to a moving pavement strip. Then there was time to marshal his thoughts as he was taken silently into the complex of chambers which housed the central government.

A deferential official passed him straight through and for the first time in his official career, he was facing the Junta which directed every phase of life on Chrysaor. Dominant colours in the hexagonal chamber were yellow and black. Six seats, each in the centre of one side held the six members of the governing council. Behind the titular leader of the assembly, the whole wall was deep ivory black, which intensified the brilliance of the yellow ovoid head. The office changed only at the death of its holder. Paria, the present incumbent, communicated in harsh bursts of energy.

"Your report."

Sophax outlined his findings. He was conscious that, in the time, he had done well. It was a complete dossier on the situation on Earth.

"That seems to be satisfactory. We shall find conditions difficult at first in that atmosphere, but we shall adapt. In any case, we have no choice. How many transfers can we make?"

Tylon came in with, "At least a hundred thousand. That will take care of all the technicians and scientists we need. For the first twenty four hours, only guards will go. Then selected breeding stock. Then, when the bridge-head is firm, the administration can follow. For the rest of the time, the flow will continue with representative sections until the effect ceases."

"Everything is ready?"

"I should be glad to show the assembly the set up in the transfer rooms."

Paria inclined his head in a gesture of agreement and the rest waited for him to move. Then they followed, in a silent

line, as he marched straight to the objective, expecting, and finding, that every door opened and every path was clear in front of him.

One of the staff of the transfer theatre approached. It was obvious that he was the unwilling bearer of bad news. His diffidence was not helped by Tylon's cold stillness and the unwavering stare of his triangular eyes. Finally he communicated.

"One of the experimental subjects has escaped."

"Escaped?" The single word was an icy threat.

"We were making some small adjustments, after previous test runs, and the next in line broke away."

"When was this?"

"Only a few moments ago. There are others ready for the demonstration."

A number of low grade operatives had been drafted in, as expendable material, for trials with the transfer apparatus. Since the link was not established, they had merely gone out of Chrysaor into some limbo which would never be tapped again, but they had provided an effective check on the functioning of the machinery, as far as it could be controlled from the dispatch end.

The members of the Junta had taken seats before a semi circular, transparent inspection wall, which looked down like a clerestory on the theatre itself. A row of metal table tops, with hinged clasps to secure the subject, lay below them. There was accommodation for twenty and nineteen places were filled.

Tylon said, "You will take the empty place yourself."

Immediately two security guards stepped forward. The being's head wavered uncertainly too and fro and then he steadied himself and walked between them. They saw him appear on the floor below and take his place on the empty table. The clasps hinged over him and he lay still.

Paria nodded that he was ready to watch and Tylon raised his hand for them to begin.

At first, nothing appeared to be happening at all. Then it became apparent that the light in the chamber below was slowly building in intensity. The twenty motionless figures were bathed in yellow light. An operator, on a long console behind the government party, began to alter the translucency of the screen, so that the intolerable glare was filtered for the watchers. Even then, the brilliance was an aching concentration; the utter quintessence of yellow light. Below them, an oval section had opened in the end wall of the transfer theatre. Through it could be seen an endless succession of concentric rings, differing in size, so that their envelope rose and fell with the progression of a sine wave.

The first metal couch in line ran to the opening and its flat top swung itself into the vertical, so that its occupant was thrust forward over the threshold. Then the metal clasps retracted and the table withdrew to its original position. Momentarily, the view was obscured by the table itself. When they could see again, his former occupant was a diminishing figure. It was possible to appreciate that the tube was not a stationary thing, but that the wave formation was in constant motion like the

rhythmic swallowing of a boa constrictor. He was being passed along a pipe which was at present adjusted to infinity.

As soon as the first couch had reached its place, the second was on the move. When the last couch was still, Tylon said, "Exactly one minute. That is one thousand, two hundred to the hour. We shall improve on that."

Paria said, "That is satisfactory. Find and destroy the missing one. Then the first day's transfer group can be prepared. There will be no time to lose."

THE MISSING OPERATIVE was not far away. He was going through a succession of unfamiliar rooms in a bid to get to some outlet to the great outdoors. Wall openings slid back for him as he approached. It was a honeycomb of interconnected workshops and living quarters. A lifetime in the starkly simple living cells of his grade had not fitted him to find his way through such a labyrinth.

Another section of wall slid away and he was in a long, white gallery which curved away in the distance to the right. It was reminiscent of a hospital ward. At intervals, glass sarcophagi stood against the bare walls. As he hurried down the centre, he got an impression of pulsing movement from the depths of each sealed case; a white palpitating bladder.

The curve back took him into the returning leg of a horseshoe. No doors. Movement in the jars was more vigorous here. Between two flanking containers, a recess offered a possible outlet. As he turned towards it, three

security guards entered the gallery. He knew they were looking for him.

In the last glass cylinder, the pale, shapeless sack was in frenzied palpitation. Even as he stumbled into the alcove, he carried an impression that the white tegument was splitting and some shining yellow substance was fighting its way out. He waited with his back to the wall. A rapid scuffing of bone on the foam floor padding told him that he had been seen. He found and pressed a number of recessed controls and looked wildly round for an opening door.

As the three searchers came into line of vision and moved forward to seize him, a screen dropped between them and the whole alcove rose in a surge of acceleration. At the end of the ride, his door opened and he was in a circular chamber unlike anything he had ever seen. The elevator door closed behind him and he heard the hum of its return. The guards would soon follow.

Glass walls gave a view of the surface of his planet. This was the first time he had ever been at this level, the first time he had ever looked out onto the open world. Yellow, arid, vast, the absence of containing walls was frightening. Vibrations announced the return of the elevator cage.

There was a wheel, like the control for a sluice gate, and he spun it, the only way it would go. With painful slowness, a section of glass began to roll back. Inch by inch, the gap widened. When the elevator door opened he had a narrow space and as they came out, he squeezed through.

A furnace blast of heat beat down on him. He sank ankle deep in fine yellow

dust. He made six laboured strides away from the observation window before the yellow light filled his head with its blank glare and he fell face downward, digging himself a mould.

He knew nothing of the activities of those who rolled back the exit, until a heat screen could be pushed out; who moved with silent, clinical precision, until he was once more secured to a table in the ante room of the transfer theatre. He only knew that he woke to the most excruciating pain.

TYLON HAD WAITED patiently until the quivering eyelids opened fully and he knew that the captive was conscious. Then, without a change of expression on the bland oval of his face, he spun the knurled disk below the table to its maximum setting. For a second, the short flat line of the mouth twisted wide open in a soundless scream of agony and the yellow body strained against the broad clasps in a demented arch. Finally it fell back and lay still.

Sophax had remained behind with Tylon. This interlude would serve a useful purpose as a deterrent. No one was now likely to question the movements required of them over the next few days. Not that opposition was likely, but a kind of nervous excitement could sweep through whole populations and cause unusual behaviour. This had happened in the past. When the tunnels were full of waiting people it could be a serious hazard.

Only Tylon remained of the Junta party. Together, they watched another batch of expendables sent down the exit tunnel. This time, a saving of just under four seconds on the batch, earned the

chief of the laboratory staff a cold word of praise from the official. Then he said, "What is the latest time that the assembly of the first day's detail can begin?"

"It is arranged for 1300 hours tomorrow. That will allow a build up of sufficient numbers, so that a continuous flow can be maintained. Any earlier would cause such local congestion that movement would be seriously hampered. Any later would mean delay and some loss of use of the full transfer period."

"Very well."

Sophax set the high frequency marshalling call in motion from console in the observation room of the ziggurat. Lines of monitoring screens showed him that the early stages of the complex manoeuvre were going with clockwork efficiency. From the remote underground communities on the opposite hemisphere of Chrysaor, picked squadrons of guards piled into sleek monorails shuttles which would carry them non stop to a planned arrival at the transfer theatre at the exact time they would be needed. Only the Junta and a few senior officials knew the precise significance of the moves. It would be time enough to communicate the whole truth when the planet Earth had been taken over. Then the new colonists would know that it was the future home of their race and that those left behind would not survive another century.

He stayed the whole night at the control panel, until the hot darkness was succeeded by the throbbing heat of another intense yellow dawn. Only a few hours remained and he knew that his part had been well done. He called

in a deputy from the room below.

"I am going to rest for four hours. Call me without fail at the first sign of change in the continuum. In any event at 1200 hours."

"Very good."

At the rear of the chamber there was an alcove containing a low bed. Sophax stretched out and was instantly asleep.

When he was wakened, the build up of personnel had begun. He left the observatory to take his place at the transfer theatre and found the white tunnel filled already by a silent waiting line. So far all guards, they carried only military equipment. Some had sections of large items which would be assembled on arrival. When they reformed, they would be complete with transport and heavy calibre weapons. In addition, each man had his own small arms, destructor tubes and gas cylinders.

At the theatre, Tylon had arrived and was sitting in impassive silence before the inspection window. Sophax took one of the 'specialist adviser' seats behind him. Duplicates of the control console screens glowed below the sill of their viewpoint. At intervals the rest of the Junta arrived. The mobile tables were filled with the first batch of guards, picked men, exceptionally tall and powerful, each carrying enough equipment to make him a self-supporting strong point.

Above the inspection window, the whole wall was a galactic map: a duplicate of the one in the observatory of Skiron. The mauve line was a throbbing bond between Chrysaor and Earth.

At 1255 the lights went low as power from the grid which served the whole

planet became channeled to one end. In the room above the theatre the mauve line appeared to glow in the wall. Minutes passed and the count entered the final quadrant. For Sophax it was the supreme moment to crown his efforts. If he had failed, he would not care about the destruction of himself which would surely follow. Tylon would need a scapegoat.

As the counter zeroed on 1300, yellow light built to its fantastic zenith in the room below and the first table began to move. As the oval aperture opened, Sophax leaned forward, shaken for the moment out of his habitual calm. Then he relaxed against the back of his chair. The Link was open. At the end of the rhythmically contracting rings, there was a huge paraboloidal bowl. Even as he registered the fact of success, the first guard was there. In the moment before the next table tipped its occupant into the link, he could be seen standing upright, signalling with uplifted hand that he had arrived, moving his bulky equipment to his back, so that he would be ready. When the third table returned to be refilled, he had already climbed some way to the edge. As the last of the first batch was sent down, he reached it, and a line of shining yellow figures could be seen like the hand of a clock pointing to three, stretching from the centre of the rim.

Tylon said, "Fifty three seconds for the first batch."

Paria turned to Sophax and said, "You have done well. You will be placed on the list for the next vacancy on the governing council."

Sophax inclined his head. He felt it

was no more than he deserved. Tylon, who was never very happy when anyone was being congratulated, contrived to burst the bubble of complacency with, "It seems that my precaution in establishing a second link will be largely a waste of effort. But nevertheless it could easily have been vital. The controller at Misus has had a subsidiary role. He should by now have sent the first elements of his force."

This was news to Sophax. He reflected, not for the first time, that Tylon would bear watching. No one could feel safe in his zone of influence. He kept silent. Tylon went on with, "The terminus chosen for the second force is very remote. In mountainous country; there, in that southern land mass." He pointed to an Earth map.

The area was marked *High Andes*. "There is a ruined settlement, which will give shelter until they are ready to break out. Machu Pichu. Only fifty selected personnel will be involved."

Sophax reflected that from the administrator's point of view, it would have been stupid to put all the eggs in one basket. Since his own project was moving satisfactorily, he could afford to be generous. He gave his mind to the scene in front of him. A cumulative count was registering on the console, two hundred shot up as he looked.

Patient files of guards moved up along the corridors in an endless yellow stream. On the terminal bowl they were moving out in lines like radii and disappearing over the circumference. That was the instruction they had been given, to go on and seize the area no matter what opposition they met.

By midday, when the link had been

open twenty three hours, the counter was showing 34,293. The administration could safely move.

Sophax was in the group with the Junta and senior officials. Tylon preceded him and even as his own feet were set down on the pulsing and contracting rings and he looked into the heart of yellow light, the administrator was dwindling away ahead of him.

THE SURFACE of the bowl was unexpectedly cold and hard. He had built up an impression from picture data that Earth would be soft, formless, spongy like its creatures; but here he was scrabbling metallically up the curve to the rim. A subdued hammering seemed to come from below, communicated to his delicate personal radar by vibrations in the skin of the bowl itself. Rhythmic, staccato noise. Louder as he neared the edge.

He hurried on and had almost reached Tylon when that one swung himself out of sight. The hammering came again. Then it was his turn, he had a moment's spasm of irritation, as he realized that the guards had made no attempt to set up a ramp or elevator to assist the official party. Nor had they rigged lights to show the whole of the descent. Only the first ten feet was floodlit so that he could see the easy trellis steps leading down.

Below him Tylon's head reappeared out of the gloom. The face turned up to him was twisted almost out of recognition in hate and anger and he knew that something was dreadfully wrong. Then the hammering started again and Tylon appeared to jerk away from the girder and go into a free fall.

Sophax stopped and rapidly assessed the situation. Then he began to go back. If he reappeared in the centre of the dish he could signal back for a temporary halt until the situation clarified. He reached the lip of the bowl before the hammering began and a line of lead slugs took him in a dropping shot along the precise centre axis of his gleaming yellow shell.

ON GROUND LEVEL, a weary civil guard pushed a fresh magazine into his hot carbine and raised it for the next target. He was on the roof of the control cabin and had ten degrees of arc as his special charge. Scavenger details ran in to clear the area of the latest remains and the mounds of angular yellow scrap grew like a slag heaps outside the high fences of the telescope centre.

The local commander, Military Controller Barker, had organized the defence in twenty four hours with the small force of civil guards which normally operated a security screen on the telescope and a contingent of police from Nantwich. He had been alerted, when a number of unidentifiable yellow corpses had appeared in fields and hedgerows in the area. It had seemed like an improbable threat to the telescope, for some purpose beyond fathomable reason. In any event, he had doubled the guard and placed two sentries inside the security zone. When the first yellow figure climbed from the dish, he had been justified.

Now he had the advance units of a brigade under his command, with top brass moving in on him from all directions. They could have it. Every man on

the site was sickened by the endless slaughter. But it could not stop. On the one occasion that a yellow figure had been allowed to reach ground level, it had sprayed round with a simple tube-like piece of apparatus and six guards had been virtually dissolved in a pale mauve vapour. Thereafter they were picked off as they appeared.

Barker was satisfied with what he saw. The situation was well under control. As long as enough guards circled the bowl, he could contain the threat. For three days, he remained on duty, snatching a few hours sleep now and then, until the whole business had an air of nightmarish unreality for him. Troops were still arriving. The Central Government was inclined to make a large scale training manoeuvre out of the affair. Journalists and commentators began to give their gloss. Information was in short supply, but nothing could be more dramatic than the mounds of twisted, shining, yellow bodies. One journal, with a reputation for kindness to animals, began a campaign about the cruelty of it all.

Then it ended as dramatically as it had begun. A few score more bodies were found scattered in the locality and then no more.

Every major university science laboratory received its share of biological and physical specimens. The only consensus of opinion was that a very real menace had been averted. Public confidence was restored, when a leading mathematician proved that it could not happen again. Indeed, with very little encouragement, he would have been prepared to argue that it had not happened even once.

(continued on page 83)

# CLOSE YOUR EYES AND STARE AT YOUR MEMORIES

## TONY MORAN

*Tony Moran comes to us via Bob Shaw as a fellow Belfaster, and this story marks his first sale. It's a stunner—and one best read with no preconceptions about the protagonists...as will become obvious...*

Illustrated by DAVE COCKRUM

KILLING SPANZIG might not be easy, thought Herck, but it would be a pleasure. His contract with NATSI was only to return the machine, but, given any sort of a chance, he would take Spanzig's life as a personal bonus for himself. The thought made him feel warm inside, almost as warm as did the peach brandy which he was sipping carefully, trying to prevent it from rounding off the sharp corners of his wits. He needed them sharp. He alone of the roisterers was less than besotted. His intoxication would come later—and from violence, not alcohol.

So far, everything had gone almost too well. He was now fully accepted by the Bounce as a useful gun. Joining Spanzig's rat pack had not been difficult—NATSI had chosen Herck carefully for this purpose, for he was a brother of the streets to each member

of the Bounce. His reputation had gone before him and no questions had been asked.

In their Flop, the only place many of the Bounce had to call home, the alcohol was beginning to drain the heat out of their revels. The hour was growing late and orgies do tend to tire, but Spanzig was not the man to allow his enjoyment to wane for lack of merry company.

"Drink up!" he urged, his voice thick with drunken cameraderie. His pack was strong enough; you lose a few boys, you gain a few—Spanzig was content.

Above ground, an occasional shell howled in its flight, going prodding at the remains of the refinery, discouraging any attempt at repair. As always, a 'Burnt Earth' policy is to be preferred when it is someone else's earth to be burnt. But as long as they

didn't fall short, one hardly noticed the shells anymore; twenty years of someone else's war blowing hot and cold gives the surviving neutrals an insulating blanket of familiarity. Why worry when you could hear the howl?—the shell had already passed. And if one felt the shockwave?—then it was too late for worry. Down here, the scene still had a certain German heartiness, but this was no beerhall party. The Berlin cellar in which the company was sprawled was all that remained of a once fashionable dwelling, a burger's home, one in which such a gathering as this would not have been permitted, even here below stairs.

"Truly," mused Herck, lounging at the main table, "Rats in the cellars of Society."

This thought would not have come to him before he was brought to Washington for briefing, just a few weeks ago. Then this was the only world he had ever known. But he had experienced the real world in America, and hoped for such a life in the future.

Obeying Spanzig's invitation-like order, all—except Herck—raised their foaming steins and drained them, crashing the tankards back on the trestles with formal relish.

Spanzig, seated at the head of the table, like a Viking chief celebrating a return from a booty-laden voyage, floated his gaze aimlessly around the room. The new boy had worked out surprisingly well, killing with skill and pleasure. His lame wing seemed no handicap.

The war lord belched loudly in mid-gulp, the beer exploding from his blubbery lips down on to the massive



paunch for which he was renowned. Fat he was, obese perhaps, but there was no suspicion of softness in this huge young man. For sport on nights like this he would allow himself to be kicked full on his belly with no ill effects. A large belly, like a tight-packed bolster, but beneath the fat were layers of muscle. When he chose, just by inflating his belly violently as he was kicked, he could hurl his attacker to the floor.

Spanzig had not gained his reputation easily. Nothing, save death, came easily in as harsh a world of violence as this, and Herck had respect for any man who could rise to lordship of a mob like the Bounce. Herck respected Spanzig, but that wouldn't make killing him less easy. All killing comes easily to a hired gun and Spanzig was easy to hate.

When Spanzig's eyes ran aground on Herck's cold blue ones, they filled with surprise rather than anger—though anger quickly followed. War lords were not to be insulted, especially not by a new gun.

"Why do you not drink, little man?" he growled, just above the background of raucous laughter and rough voices. His heavy jowls swelled, the veins in his neck bulging through the lard. In this hungry world, only his food-stuffed frame was more famous than his lethal rages.

Herck smiled, but not with his eyes: they had never smiled in any of his eighteen years.

"You insult me!" roared the fat man, slamming down his tankard so that half the remaining beer slopped on to the well-soaked planking of the table.

"I know," grinned Herck, seemingly

unaware of the increase in space as the females near him inched away. One word from Spanzig and the Bounce would lose their newest packster.

"Cripple Slime!" gurgled Spanzig, his beery spray hastening his own bed wenches' withdrawal. "You are mine! Meat for my table! I'm going to carve you here and now!"

A mob of young muscle pressed in around the outsider, but they knew better than to damage a potential victim of their boss, who took every opportunity to demonstrate his prowess before his people.

Spanzig waved them back.

"This is my meat, I said!" he roared.

The Bounce's front line drew back, ready to witness a scene by now quite familiar in their stronghold. Loners lived and killed by their wits, not their muscles. This one was about to be crushed. Hell! Even without his stunted left arm there was no contest.

Herck still remained seated, at first apparently at ease, but now it suited his purpose to feign signs of nervousness.

"All right, all right!" he said hurriedly, reaching forward as if to pick up his tankard.

Spanzig sat down again. Sure of himself before his men, he, too, reached forward to finish his beer.

"You're too late, dwarf. Drinking time is over. I'm going to drag you up top, if I have to, and break every bone in you sweating head."

The war lord bent forward, raising the heavy jug to his loose lips. It was a moment such as this that Herck had been hoping for since the beginning. He leaped quickly straight up, landing with both feet on the bench. A lightning



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movement and he was on the table.

Quicker than Spanzig could raise his leaden head—Herck had killed.

He had kicked, toes back, with all his force, on the bottom of the tankard being drained into Spanzig's formless mouth. The lip of the ale jug shattered against the mobster's yellowing teeth. A jagged shard, ugly as broken glass, was driven through the roof of his mouth.

The base of his brain already pierced, Spanzig's neck was broken before he tumbled back over the bench, his face seeming to smile a wide, crimson smile.

Herck was already half-way to the iron-bound door at the end of the cellar before anyone else could move. This was the target towards which he had been aimed since the briefing.

"It's a master thief who can take a theif-master," he thought, grinning with satisfaction as he ran. Killing always made him feel a real somebody. It gave him all the lift he ever wished.

At the doorway stood two guards, only now swinging their pump-action scatter-guns in his direction. Herck jabbed against the tiled floor with the edge of a boot heel. It was armed as soon as it separated. He bowled it towards the door while throwing himself clear. The grenade spread one guard into the store-room, using his body for a battering-ram against the door. The other would never see again. He had been unlucky enough to escape the main force of the blast. The thermite in the hyper-toluene mix caused a minor sun, from the most of which his armoured jacket had protected him, but his face was naked to the short-range heat. On the remains of his cheeks his eyes bulged

like egg yolks.

Yet he still moved.

Even Herck would have felt disgust at the sight, but he was in the storeroom without stopping to observe it. He preferred clean kills and, had he had time, he would have cleaned this one by a boot edge to the base of the horror's skull.

He loosened the built-up heel of the other boot. This contained a larger charge, designed to give a more directional blast. Before the mobsters had recovered from the first explosion, the second had demolished the doorway and the narrow vaulted ceiling just outside, sealing him in the darkness, safe from any attack which might come from their direction.

He lay panting for a long time. His masters should be pleased with his performance; the machine was as good as back in their plant. He didn't really understand why it should be so important to recover; it had been gone for over ten years, and in a project like Orion, they must have produced many machines since. But all he should be concerned with was the price. The Natsis paid well. So far, everything had gone according to plan. Now, push a button and he and the machine would home on Project Orion. Just the push of a button—that was all that stood between him and real life.

Recovered, he clicked on his small Russian torch. At first, the white glow from its magnesium-based fuel showed only swirling patterns of grey brickdust. As the clouds cleared he saw the strongroom to be just as he had been told to expect. Valuables of all kinds littered most of the free space on

the food shelves. The floor was strewn with gadgets whose purpose he could not even guess at. Weapons of all kinds, old and new, were stacked surprisingly neatly or were locked in racks along most of the available wall space. At the far end of the solid, stone-walled room, about forty feet away, stood the machine—a dull, uninteresting-looking object standing between ammunition crates and yet more shelves of preserved food.

It was as it had been described to him—a man-high electronics cabinet, about ten feet long. On its plain greyish sides only two features appeared—a padded seat recess and, next to it, a raised control panel. The buttons set into the panel were of transparent material, which, when depressed, became illuminated, so that each button acted as an indicator. At the moment, all the panel was dark.

Herck was moving steadily closer, picking his way carefully through the junk on the floor. He reached out and ran his fingertips over the elaborate array of clockface dials on the padded arm rests, being careful not to disturb the setting of the variable, rheostat-like slides under each. He knew there was no possibility of upsetting them—they were locked until a combination of procedures turned the machine on—but they were his ticket out and he treated them with the respect they deserved. All in all, he was delighted—most of all with himself. He had reached the machine and recognised the controls as old friends. They were exactly the layout he had trained on at Orion.

Seating himself right away, he pushed the required buttons in the se-

quence he had memorised, locked in the temporal control slides and sat back, unconsciously bracing himself.

There was a noise fit to tear him from his skull. He had to force his eyes open as if against a great weight.

He should have arrived, just a few days in the past, in the Bays at Orion. But not a thing looked different. He was still in the storeroom.

"WE'RE NOT ALWAYS RIGHT, you know," said Powers in his nervous, pedantic tones—a weak voice from a tall, capable man. "For example, just because we've never had a probe from the Future doesn't mean it's physically impossible. We're too inclined to see laws of Physics empirically, after much too little experimental investigation. But my main worry is with our deliberately taking this life, and unnecessarily to my mind. It's murder! The man is in our pay. I don't think we can ever justify NATSI policy in this case. We're becoming monsters!"

O'Brien flicked his eyes around cautiously. America was the Home of the Free and he intended to remain a fully-benefitted citizen. You never knew who was watching whom. Dave Powers' Psychonomics background made him unsuited to the more practical aspects of this work, he felt.

"There is no Right or Wrong when Survival is at stake—there is only Survival", he quoted loyally from the Induction Course lecture each NATSI trainee received.

The two operatives were strolling in the spacious central gardens of their famous headquarters, Big Five. Their organisation took up one facet of the pen-

tagonal complex—the other sides of the building going to the Army, Navy, Air Force and, that final arbiter, Security.

"Anyway," O'Brien went on. "This Herck. Let's take a look at him. Left to run his own life, how long would he survive? What's the life expectation of a Survivor in Europe nowadays? We did the young hood a favour. For the weeks he spent here he was more comfortable than at any time in his life. And what did your report say, Manic Depression? Paranoid Schizophrenia?"

"No! No! I said I had detected some indications of psychosis," disagreed his colleague. "But who wouldn't be disturbed after a life such as he has had? I'm not being disloyal to NATSI, it's just that since childhood I believed it could do no wrong; and now I find I'm a party to creating the conditions for the breaking of the Reykjavik Convention."

"This is your first project. Wait till you've been here as long as I have. You'll see—we're keeping the peace of the Free World," boasted O'Brien. "The North American Temporal Science Institute—the name still has a ring to it. Just mention anywhere that you're from NATSI and people jump!"

"Is that what you want—people to jump when you're around?"

Good God! thought O'Brien, his nephew's words could be interpreted as Treason—and each word could be on monitor right now. He was dangerous.

How could he have allowed himself to sponsor Powers' application? His academic qualifications were first class, but he had always had a very Labourist-like way of expressing himself. He'd have to get this young fool's

thinking on the right lines pretty damn quick.

"Look," he began impatiently, "we're fighting a war that was years old when I was your age."

"And what did you do in the war, Daddy?"

O'Brien ignored the jibe.

"This is a very small part of that war that you've just seen, and from the comfort of a Big Five office. We're no more than agents, despite what people think. We only apply the policies. We're neither of us presidential advisors. If the President has okayed a Jump beyond the Reykjavik Limits, he must have good enough reasons."

"But it would be so unfair, to bring our war into someone else's time—possibly into our own forefathers' youth."

"Rubbish! You know that never did happen, so it never will happen. And we are at present deliberately fighting the war in someone else's back yard. Neither the Russians nor ourselves want our homelands affected, but we don't mind ruining a dozen other countries. Where is that famous logic of yours that your mother's always boasting about? You're talking like one of your patients."

"I don't have patients any more. I only wish I did. I'd feel I was doing some good in the world. An agreement that Time would not be used, even for non-military purposes, outside the Temporal Limits, seems logical enough to me. Limits of from the start of the war to the present seem logical enough to me. We can still use the Future for any purposes we like, if we ever get a probe back. And we will, one day. I

don't believe in this Barrier idea, as you know.

"But," Powers hurried back to the subject, "because history doesn't show any temporal activity in the past doesn't mean we can't cause some harm back there, even if in some apparently insignificant way. Not everything is reported in the history books, you know."

"There's another reason for choosing a nobody like Herck. If he does ever get turned up, he obviously isn't NATSI personnel," explained the older man. "And it will be obvious to everyone that he was acting completely independently of any American orders. Anyway, you know as well as I do that he won't make it—let's not fool ourselves."

He saw the expression that crossed the young scientist's face. Realising that he had just said altogether the wrong thing, he added quickly, "So maybe we have deliberately killed someone in our pay—and that's not for sure—so what? He was a very third-rate human anyway. A failure as a human in fact. He was more like a jungle animal than any teenage boy I've ever seen. And apart from any high-level strategy, we had to keep the transit device out of other hands—didn't we? If we could have been sure of jumping it back here we would have."

"You gave your word to that German boy that he'd only to reach the device and he could pop back here. You had him practise on that so-called simulator, and it was all a great put-on. I don't know how I was able to stomach it."

His uncle snorted.

"War is nearly as dirty a game as politics. You were part and parcel of the plan. You drew the personality inventory of the type we'd want. All I did was produce a personality to that pattern in the person best suited to carry out the rest of the task, and stuff him full of the necessary information," said O'Brien, surprised to find himself on the defensive. If this came off there could be a promotion for both of them—why should he feel uneasy too, when he was simply doing his duty to the best of his ability? His nephew was getting under his skin—he'd never felt this way before. These young intellectuals were all on the anti-war kick nowadays, that's what was probably motivating the young fool.

"You knew it was patently impossible to steer him here," he accused Powers. "Hell! Your Temporal theory is better than mine, or so say the letters after your name. The machine is ten years out of date—even if it had ever done what was intended. It can't steer temporally and spatially like modern devices. What would you want us to do with a Mark 1? I keep telling you, you chose him as the type who wouldn't have followed orders anyway. He's a berserker. He's bound to try to go marauding through time, to live like a predatory animal off defenseless primitives.

"He'll get his just desserts. If he follows orders and doesn't touch the dials he'll be okay. He'll land somewhere in Mediaeval Asia, as far as my people can guess, taking only the rotation of the Earth into consideration. Mongolia probably. That's the safest place we could think of trying

to dump the machine.

"Herck will most likely end up as a war lord with his talents and run a harem of a thousand slant-eyed beauties. When this war is over and the Limits are removed you can have someone look him up if you're still concerned. But he will alter the dials. He'll try to be clever and take us for mugs. You chose him to react like that. By your definition, he's an honourless, fearless madman, who never kept a bargain in his life. He doesn't deserve to be treated like an American."

"That's not the point and you know it," Powers replied, his voice sulky. "It's worse than shooting an unarmed man in the back. At least that's quick. But can anyone imagine an eternity of nothing? That's what you've sentenced him to—not even a lifetime of agony, but an eternity of paralysis. He'll be a living mummy buried alive in No Time."

"But he's a nobody—why should you care? And I know you don't really—it's that effeminate college-boy conscience getting an airing. There are a million more deserving cases just downtown. Snap out of it, will you? All he had was survival potential in his own society and the right background for our purpose. He's a rat—that's what they call themselves, you know—Street Rats. Who else but a rat could gain entry to a rat warren? And life means nothing to him. Have you forgotten his record? In the States he'd have been Mashed years ago."

"Or been a Control Chief for NATSI," said his nephew gloomily.

That did it, O'Brien decided. Nephew or no nephew, he had to look after him-

self—he'd have to report him as Unamerican in matters of political thought—and the sooner the better.

Concealing his feelings as years of practice had made easy, he looked with a face of sincerity into the other man's eyes. "I did give him a chance. I more or less told him a couple of times."

"But you knew he wouldn't understand. He couldn't even read or write. 'Clocks don't measure Time.' How was he to know what that meant?"

"Any school-kid would understand that line," bluffed his uncle, "It's a rule of life rather than science, and when the war is over and unlimited time travel is available world wide, it'll be as popular as Archimedes' 'Eureka'."

**HERCK RAGED.** He had checked the controls and everything seemed as it should. They had assured him that the machine was in working order. It had been built so as to be practically unbreakable and their Intelligence and all their Cyclotemp readings claimed that it was untouched. He had believed them, he could do nothing else, and look what had happened. He would never learn. He cursed himself; he might be a success, a champion, at this life, but he was a child in the real world. Acting on their briefing, he had trapped himself in here, in a back room of a cellar. And now the torch was smoking out. The first thing to do was to find some other light. He made a careful tour of the room.

Half an hour later he was more comfortable. A swig of Rhenish wine had cooled the dust in his throat, while the double-action automatic, his choice

from the dozens of weapons available round him, was a comfort in his fist. He caressed it in the glow of the light-spreader he had found. Its batteries were limited, but the darkness was an enemy to be beaten back.

He could live in here for months with no effort, but the movements of the opposing armies could make this whole area a front-line cauldron before then—even if the Bounce didn't take any active measures against him. The only reasons he could think of why they hadn't already come ripping in here after him were that they knew that he couldn't go anywhere, and the gang lieutenants were still to settle their respective rights to the succession following Spanzig's removal. Still, Herck would have expected to have heard some movement beyond the rubble-filled doorway before now. The uncertainty was getting to him. Though, only an hour before, he had been more than healthily elated by the success of his plan, black depression now gnawed at his soul. Soundlessly, hugging the automatic to his cheek, he allowed tears of self-pity to overflow his eyelids and draw lines in the grime on his face. He bit hard into the ball of his thumb, enjoying the pain as a sublimation of his suicidal mood. If only there were some positive action he could take! But apart from tearing a hole in the rubble, which was probably more than a dozen metres thick, and facing the rage of the Bounce, he had no ideas. Eventually, he thought, he would go out and die facing them, but how much easier it would be just to press the barrel of the pistol against his temple here and now. Why had he

clung so determinedly to miserable life for all these years?

Herck was born to violence and lived a life of daily conflict. The only family he had ever known was a large one; he had a million siblings. War orphans have no kin but others of the streets. To survive, he trained himself in humanity's special skill until he could kill well and with little effort. His wits were his tools and they had served him well—until now.

This was Herck, street-rat of battle-battered Berlin. All Germany was war-torn. Like most European countries, it was a convenient Buffer State, whose lands had by now been well and truly buffed down by the action of the two Great Powers. Its language had been crushed with it. So had most other national tongues; many of them lived on only in the former colonies of once proud powers. When life reaches a certain depth national frontiers also cease to exist. The struggle to survive is the same in all parts of the land mass.

In Central Europe only the languages of the belligerents had any strength. In Germany, where armies continually heaved against each other, only their tongues were spoken by the new Germans. German and Germany were dead.

Ruins, rats and refuse were all that remained. The movements of the war fronts left the new generation of scavengers as the only permanent tenants of the wasteland.

Herck was found, a whimpering mess of vitamin deficiency by some of the first Ivans to enter Berlin and was cared for unofficially by them for the first half of his life. By twelve he had killed;

to prevent his ten-year-old sister of the streets from being apprenticed to a trade she had no ambition to enter.

Females were a valuable commodity, but he had never felt that promotion of the comfort's trade was for him—not from any aesthetic feelings, just that there were too many overheads with the merchandise for his liking. The profits were good when either army was near, but he was greedy. There were quicker rewards elsewhere.

The pimp he had killed was a successful fourteen-year-old, trying to increase his stock now that the Czarists were in residence. Herck's status had improved as a consequence, though he had not killed to satisfy any ambition. The girl had been kind to him, comforting him when others called him 'One Wing' and mimicked him, tucking stiffened left arms into their belts as he did with his to keep it immobile.

He soon had enough confidence to take what he wanted from whomever he liked, and to protect his own property from nearly all comers. All, that is, but Spanzig and his pack. In the days after their raid on his shell-hole cave, one or two of them had died and he had felt better. He couldn't allow them to succeed unscathed, even if Spanzig was unaware that someone was acting against him. There was always wastage in his line.

As the young Herck saw it, since one only had one life, it was important to succeed first time out, and success meant survival. There were no second chances in his world.

His chance came during the American tenancy. While they were making what their leaders would ex-

plain as a 'politically motivated withdrawal,' an officer looking for local operatives remembered him. His own men, he had said, were first class, but locals might be of use some day.

Trapped in this funk hole, it seemed to Herck that his chance had not come off.

A noise!

Herck was on his feet, crouched holding the hand gun in a stiffarmed, professional stance, facing where it had come from. His useless arm made any expertise at rifle-shooting impossible, but he was deadly with a small-arm at useful distances.

The rubble in the doorway was falling outwards and a light, yellowish like very strong sunlight, was raying through the chinks. A major stone was removed. Quick as thought, Herck shot the yellow face between the mongoloid eyes which appeared in the gap.

A howl arose from a chorus of strange voices outside.

O'BRIEN AND POWERS had returned to their respective offices. Each of them realised that, despite the heat with which their views had been expressed, neither of them really cared about Herck's fate. The Machine had been disposed of, that was all that mattered.

O'Brien thought again about reporting Dave. He knew where his duty lay and his pension was only a few years ahead, but Dave was his sister's boy, after all. He'd have to balance his promotion chances against any possible family trouble if his action were discovered.

He'd had to work hard to get to his position, while young Dave could live it

up for a few years at college, scrape a few degrees together and come into the Service at the same grade as himself. It hardly seemed fair—he'd risked his life in his job quite a few times in the last twenty years, only to see himself passed over by chair-bound college types. Still, he'd give Dave Powers a little time to adjust—it was good to keep a family representative in a position of privilege and power.

Dave Powers was preparing the item he had been invited to submit for the next Temporal Society Journal. His first chapter lay completed, returned from the typer for correction. He glanced over it, finding it uninspiring reading. It was going over such old ground. Paradoxes.

Paradoxes had been proved impossible years ago, even before Time Jumps had been attempted. Everyone knew that there was nothing one could do back in Time to change the Present or the Future. In fact, now that it had been proved satisfactorily by experiment, it seemed foolish that anyone had ever suggested that the past could be changed from the one which everyone knew. After all, it never had been changed, had it? If it had he wouldn't be here now.

There was nothing new he could say there. Powers' real interest lay in breaking the so-called 'Barrier' of the Future, but there was nothing he could write about that without giving away information—not to outsiders (the Journal was for circulation inside NATSI only)—but to his competitors here. The Future was the main challenge and many projects were in hand to break through, none so far with any success

that he was aware of.

Powers scrapped what he had as old hat and tried again. "The History of NATSI". There was a good theme! He thought of the early attempts at Jumps and the prototype Transitemps reminded him of Herck. Guilt still disturbed the psychonomist.

At least the explosions most of the earliest machines caused wouldn't devastate Herck's. "It would have been certain death if we'd sent him off in an Edison," he muttered aloud, much to the amusement of the two young clerical assistants working at the files in the corner of the office. Their giggles embarrassed him and his irksome glance hurried them back to the general office.

The Edison Mistake. He'd have to find a new angle on it to make his article interesting. It seemed incredible now that even the discoverer of the Time Jump had not realised that the removal of any matter from a finite space would cause an implosion of its surroundings. The great Thomas Edison had removed himself and most of Philadelphia by not realising the effects of Time Movement. One just can not suddenly remove matter from a continuum. Every piece of matter had existed before and always will exist. The only change that usually happens is that it is converted from one form to another, either using or losing energy in the process.

Powers started the recorder again, at the beginning of reel. "When a man dies his body is returned to the soil for re-cycling," he began.

But when a complete building winks out of this time, in the fraction of a

micro-second, a hard vacuum is created, and the atmosphere abhors a vacuum. Now, there was a better first line for his article. He spoke into the audio-recorder, "As some ghoulish Nuclearist was later heard to remark, 'It's an ill wind. . . .'"

That was a good approach for him; show how a major mistake could prevent a cataclysmic one. But for the Philadelphia Disaster, Atomic Theory might have left the blackboard and actually been put to the test. Theory was all very well, and it had been claimed by some of his own professors that a controllable explosion of fantastic power was possible by bombarding certain atoms by neutrons, but as long as NATSI had any say, no such experiment would take place. He agreed with the official line—how could one be sure that each atom in the Earth would not collapse once one started such a reaction? Mathematical proofs were insufficient in such a matter as this.

Powers changed his mind yet again and deleted what he had recorded. He would find himself indulging unhealthily in politics if he pursued that line.

Things weren't going right. Damn the article anyway, he fumed, tilting his chair on to its back legs. In the academic field one was expected to produce a certain number of papers on one's subject; his article would have to be worthy of him if it were to help further his career.

He thought about the German case—there was his inspiration! Sam O'Brien's words came to him and the complete theme for the article lay stretched out in his mind.

He flipped the record switch and, with increasing fluency, began. "Let us think back to where none of us would have cared that clocks don't measure time."

He glanced at his wristwatch—it was half an hour to coffee break.

HERCK WAS MYSTIFIED. It should have been a dark German night above, and instead, just outside his cellar blazed a tropical-sunned day, filled with slant-eyed men.

The machine must have Jumped, after all, bringing a chunk of the cellar with it. They hadn't told him that would happen. It wasn't broken, then! Its control settings had been over-ridden.

He ran to the rubble and stared out.

"Starve!" he swore. An oriental barbaric army was grouped in loose formation around him. With elaborate wavings of hands, a party of what he could only suppose to be priests had advanced towards him and were performing some ritual in the direction of this dragon's cave. To better view the scene, Herck shoved aside the mongol face with its third bloody eye. A greater howl arose from the terrified warriors as the body slid from the stones. But the priests stood their ground and took up their chant in even shriller voices. Herck admired their courage—the rest of the mediaeval horde were edging back as if pushed by a slow invisible hand.

He'd better get out of here, in burning quick time too, he thought. *Pour encourager les autres*—that was the dead tag that Powers had once used, he remembered.

Herck grinned and dragged a tripod-braced multi-firer to the gap in the doorway. A thirty second burst and he had exhausted the ammunition belt.

The priests were a bleeding bump on the sun-hardened earth. After the bullets stopped, only a few twitches and a single crawling shape gave them any movement.

Perhaps more faith-filled than the others, a few of the warriors stopped in their headlong flight, but they were doing nothing more aggressive than to try to ward off the evil eye.

Herck's grin was spread wide as he savoured the sight. He now felt he had time to try for a chance. He ran to the machine and spun the dials to as near the necessary points as he could guess. Since the machine was still running the slides moved easily. All he needed now was to *Jump*. Later, he thought, he could try a more exact zeroing-in when he found how close to his own time he landed.

He pushed the *accept* button and braced himself.

POWERS RETURNED from the Executive Canteen, feeling that he had made things up a bit with his tetchy uncle.

He was eager to get back to his report. Seating himself comfortably, he played back what he had recorded so far, changing the odd word here or there. He was quite pleased with this version, only the last couple of paragraphs remained to get straight. A flick of the thumb started the tape winding past the record-head again.

"Once, a decade ago, we attempted to steer our devices by gauging our distance in time from *Now*. *Now*, being

a fixed point, set up in the Core Store of the Cyclotemp and the transit device to which it is linked. It seemed possible to steer from this point by the most obvious device available—a high precision form of clock. To move two hours, one adjusted the target by two hours. Our Math proved all the theory precisely. Then, after the *Mark I* was already in production and several working models were available, just one premise was questioned. It was only when the expected results were not obtained that an answer was sought, and there it was—clocks didn't measure time.

"While in this continuum, clocks fulfill their function satisfactorily. Here, pendulums continue to have an approximately regular periodic time. The tension in springs can be relied upon to unwind them in a comparatively regular way.

"But out in this theoretical *No Time*, these phenomena need not apply. Even if we bring our own time sphere with us into *No Time*, Time is constant within it, but clocks do not measure time, and what they do measure is not constant.

"So out there, because pendulums do not swing in the same way, because springs do not contract as they would here, because electricity does not flow at the same rate, the traveler may be marooned eternally. His chronometer only measures the contraction of a spring.

"He is not a sailor becalmed on a motionless sea, for he travels without cease, but he will never arrive. This aimless voyager drifts on a directionless current, from whose purposeless track he can never steer himself.

"How can any of us guess at what

such an existence is like? I am of the opinion that even Thought is denied to such a one, for a thought takes a finite time to form and to be experienced. In fact, I am sure that changes in any state, even the mental, are impossible. All change requires Time, or obviously no change could take place, but out there, there is No Time.

"An unsteerable ship hurtling nowhere, or rather notime, forever--from such a simple oversight, and so simply repaired.

"Since one factor was impossible to plot a course by, another was chosen—Distance. Location has been simple to pinpoint since the days of Sail. The stars are always with us, but their positions change and these changes can be used as a temporal map for us.

"So here we are, voyagers in the days of Sail with the Transitemp Mark 2, looking ahead to the Mark 3 when we will enter an equivalent to the age of Steam, which, we hope, will open to us the wealth of the Future. The blank canvas of the Future upon which we can draw and erase.

"We will go forward!"

At least I will, thought Powers.

IN THE DUE COURSE of time, Powers' ambition was realised. This was him moment. The respectful, perhaps envious, crush of his colleagues surrounded him in the main Launching Bay. It was his theory they had carried through to its conclusion—the Launch.

His theory had been acclaimed throughout the world of Temporal Science. A real breakthrough, and not only metaphorically, he hoped.

He knew that O'Brien at least thought him a fool not to have requested a military volunteer, but his own life was a small stake in the attempt to break the *Barrier* and find Glory.

The Mark 3 Transitemp was the most valuable and elaborate vehicle that any traveller had ever had. The risk was of minimal size, he felt. The math had been checked and agreed on by the finest brains in NATSI.

The technicians and academics withdrew into the bunkers. Pushing aside any little gnawing, cowardly doubts, he made himself comfortable in the luxury of the time machine's interior.

Damn it, he was beginning to feel like a blasted hero!

Milking a few unnecessary minutes for all their dramatic tension, he reached forward towards his control console. He began his part of the extensive operations to prepare for a Jump.

OUT THERE, in No Man's Time, Herck basks in the reflections of his own glory. This existence is perfection, satisfaction, more than humanity's imagination could hope for, a superior Nirvana.

*Awareness*, that is all. Yet all the hunger of a soul is fed by that awareness. Aware of Life, of Himself. There is nothing but Self to hold a God's interest overlong.

A universe without Time—a world weakened accordingly, perhaps, having but three quarters of the intended dimensions.

*In the country of the Blind, the one-eyed man is king.*

(continued on page 119)

# ON ICE

*What is the ultimate drug—and to whom would it most appeal? Warning: if you prefer not to read stories in which the politely unmentionable is made explicit, skip this one...*

## BARRY N. MALZBERG

**I**GIVE IT to my mother. Isn't this what I always wanted? What else was always on my mind? It is extraordinary, absolutely extraordinary to do it in this way: I did not know the old bitch had so much drive in her.

"Do it son!" she shrieks, her wrinkled hands beating away at my neck, her thighs urging me into a more profound pace and I yield her literally everything that I have got, yards and yards of need or so it seems at this point, my genitals uncoiling like rope within her . . . and I shoot deep into her murky abcesses the load I have held back for decades, weeping I sent her the load I have always carried within me . . . and my sobs and shrieks could be mistaken for agony as she holds me against her and murmurs comfort, soothes me, advises me to be calm. "These things happen," she murmurs, still twitching against me, "you've got to learn to take them in stride."

"I don't have to be calm, you bitch!" I shouted, springing from her, the weapon of my necessity still shrieking

hard to the touch as I stuff it away in my pants. "I have a perfect right to do anything I want to do and you can't touch me. You don't even understand me!" I add which, although perfectly justifiable complaint and an old one, sounds somewhat thin under the circumstances and so, disgusted within myself, disgusted with my perversity, I go away from there quite hurriedly, seeking a different direction as once again they pull me to the surface. It always ends this way; I am *yanked* from situations. There is no dignity in any of this. Something has got to be done.

### II

I'M SURE you found that fascinating," the girl at the desk says to me on the way out. "I can always tell, telling's my job and I can see from your face that you really enjoy that. When should I schedule your next appointment?" and she takes a card from the file rack behind her (my card!), holds a pen, looks at me expectantly,

and some aspect of taunting in her eyes make me want to shout, brutalize, tell her that whatever my condition she has no right, this wretched parasite, to sit in judgement of me . . . but then I remember that this is the Clinic and the Clinic is impersonal and that once again I have stumbled into the old habit of personal referent. So I only tell her that I will make two more appointments, one for later this week and one at the beginning of the next and then, giving her the money in advance as always, hold back my fingers from intimation of a caress . . . then stagger out the door, as they say, a free man, purged for the time being of these old resentments and obsessions, only mildly interested in the weather and situations outside so absorbed am I in my sense of release. The Clinic is purgation, Purgation is release. Release is freedom. Free, free! . . . but already I am dreaming of my next appointment.

### III

GOING UNDER I hold my desires until the last moment, meditating. Then I tell the technician who I want to do it to and how. I whisper it into the transceiver like a horrid confidence which perhaps it is although I long since thought that I had forsaken shame . . . and then, not a moment too soon, the drugs begin to ripple. They overtake and I am under.

### IV

AND SO I do it to the receptionist, the bitch receptionist at the Clinic. Naked she lies under me, dreadful passions

sifting and shimmering between her cheekbones and then her mouth opens and she whispers the inexpressible. "Because I want it," she adds with delicacy, "I want it and it must be done in this way." She touches the back of my neck, fingers claw, I gasp, convulse, mount her.

"Yes," I say, "yes, you deserve it," and lower myself slowly into her then as if from a great height and she works me over patiently, lovingly. I feel her smooth tongue wind its way in and out of my mouth and then she lowers herself making loose, clucking sounds, gasps and takes my engorged prick between her teeth. I straddle the bed sweating, considering her helplessness, my dominance, her submission, my power, her emptiness, my fulfillment, her need, my control. "You think," I say, "you think you're so godamned superior to me out there but it's all the same you cunt, isn't it now?" talking, talking some more, talking inexhaustibly as she works on me with her bovine competence. "You see us come in and out, you think you know what's in our heads, you make the appointments and set the tapes but let me tell you this, you have *nothing* to hold over us because who's paying the bills? Think about this; think about it bitch: people like *me* are putting up the price and anyway I'm keeping my antisocial tendencies under check thanks to this which is more than you can say. What's *your* excuse?" I mumble, feeling the come rising and billowing, I am furious, try to disengage so that I can stick it deep into her but too late, too late—

—And so I come into the recep-

tionist's mouth then, drained of the last drop. Her eyes close to the force of my come, then they open with a look a perfect contentment, she smiles around my prick . . . and swallows everything.

She cleans me out and then releases, shaking her head, clenching her little hands. Hovering over her as I do, I see at last her helplessness, I know that I have got her exactly where she deserves to be . . . but before I can take advantage of this new insight I feel myself going out of there, rising quickly at right angles to the situation, disappearing . . . and try as I may to hold onto this scene it is definitely too late. I surface gasping.

My last image is of the receptionist of the dream superimposed upon the receptionist herself as I leave, the look on her face as she sees me go (does she know what I elected to do?) and as I stop there to make two more appointments she can surely tell from my eyes exactly what has been going on and what use I have made of her but it is too late. There is nothing she can do. She is only an employee.

As I leave I cast her a single wink from the door which breaks through the mask and she gives me then a look of perfect astonishment which, mingled with my own satisfaction, serves well to get me through the afternoon.

v

IN THE MANDATORY monthly before the next treatment, my therapist says that he is disturbed by certain aspects of my behavior.

"You're not getting along quite as we had hoped," this therapist, a bland,

rosy little man with a nametag says. "Not exactly." Under the law, the treatments, as I understand, can only be given under the guise of "therapy" but even though I know this and am willing to accept the charade it is hard, often hard, to remain patient.

"That's none of your business," I say. "I'm paying the price. I inherited a fortune and so can pay you what you ask. Your responsibility should stop right there."

"Oh no," the therapist says with patent shock and the slightest intimation of a lisp. We have been through this before. "You know that this isn't the aim at all. The treatments are a temporary application, they are to be used therapeutically and they are not in any way to be thought of as an end in themselves. They are for treatment purposes; the institution is a curative program. Why, if the treatments were given without discrimination," he says, "that would be addictive; if we weren't moving toward therapeutic goals we would be misleading you terribly. And we just aren't very satisfied. I'm afraid that the monitors we inspect have shown some very distressing things. You're beginning to incorporate people from your present, ongoing life in the treatment and that isn't what we wanted at all. You must try to stay in the past and clear out the tensional memories."

"Just leave me alone," I say. "You let me do what I want." Under statute, the mandatory monthlies last half an hour and are supposed, I understand, to deal with "progress" and "goals". This is bad enough but what is even worse is that they are to be considered "appoint-

ments" as well and we must pay for them at the same rate as for use of the machines. This is all part of the swindle, of course, but there is hardly anywhere else to go. One can hardly cross the street to visit the competition: the Institute, as its promotional program has made quite clear, controls every possible patent on its marvelous device.

Knowing this, however, is little help. The mandatories are impossible. I have heard rumors of subjects who bribed their therapists into silence and of others who attacked them physically without retaliation but the treatments are too important to me (I am willing to admit this) to take any risks and so I have tried to take the tactic of patient listening without becoming involved. "If you say so," I say to him. "I can't argue with that."

"But that's the point," the therapist says. His eyebrows rise; his lisps seem more prominent. "This withdrawal of yours, the refusal to recognize that you may have a serious problem which you're evading. Now, our monitors indicate that instead of combing through your *past* and using the treatment as a well, *purgative*, you're beginning to indulge yourself in fantasies." He seems to blush. "Fantasies with not only the, uh, people you may know in your present but with some of the institutional staff itself and—"

"I'm paying," I say. "I'm paying your price. I'm meeting all of the fee schedules and doing it promptly which I'm sure is more than most of the others can say. I inherited a lot of money so you can suck me dry. So—"

"Oh come now," he says, "you don't

think that the motives of our Institute are purely mercenary now do you? We've got other purposes rather than profit and loss. That's the kind of thinking pattern you possess which we want to break. You regard everything in purely exploitative terms but we really want to *help*, we want to see you *grow*, we want to enable you to *overcome* your psychic deficiencies because only in that way—"

"Enough!" I say. The half-hour is over; I can see the clock above us. "enough, enough of this!" and rise from the chair, zooming then, as if in intercourse, to great height and a feeling of control. "I won't listen to any of this from you now. I can do anything I want to do because I can meet the price and furthermore I'm not hurting anyone, not a soul and furthermore, the only interest you people have in me or in any of us is purely the *money* so you leave me alone now. It's time for my treatment and I'm going there." It makes sense to schedule the mandatory monthly right before a treatment. "If you don't let me go," I say, leaning over the little therapist, moving forehead to forehead against him, "I'll stop the treatments." I hate to be threatening (it is pure bluff anyway) and we have been this way before but on the other hand, this seems to be the only way in which the monthlies can end for me. "I'll stop them because you and I both know that I can if I say so and think of all the money the Institute will lose and all of it will be *your* fault. Three appointments a week, that's four hundred and fifty dollars. Almost twenty-five thousand a *year*: do you make half of that?" and feint a little

punch at him. He pushes the chair back, loses control, his tiny legs pump and skitter and he goes rolling across the room colliding with a *click!* against the wall (is he metal?) and quickly I am on top of him, seizing his thin shoulders.

"You know you can't make me," I shout, "now don't give me any of that therapeutic bullshit, don't talk to me any more, just sign the godamned authorization and send me through or I'm finished with all of you!" and his little eyes roll in his head, his eyes dance and glaze, his delicate forehead twitches and mumbling, muttering, he picks himself from the chair piece by piece, by handhold, staggers across the room to his desk, signs the paper and gives it to me. Twelve more treatments approved.

"You're making a mistake," he whines, a tiny forefinger subtly moving toward his nostril to pick and squeeze but now, my purpose accomplished, I am insulated from him again and so I laugh. I giggle mercilessly at the ignorant therapist (is this too a dream?) and spring from the room toward the release of the corridors and the machine that I know will always await me.

## VI

I THINK of a cousin who teased and taunted me to coitus interruptus when I was fifteen, I think of my father whose sallow cheeks (let me face this) I have always wanted to bugger but they bore me. I have been there before and if not I can always get there toward predictable ends. Instead, I whisper a more exciting order to the technician as

the levers in the helmet close and then I—

—Well I do it to the therapist. I dream that I am standing over his naked body in a room hung with whips and garrots. In the midst of all this armament, I order him to kneel, turning the other way and as he does so I seize a dull sword from its pocket on the wall and begin to beat him over the shoulders. The blood runs, his shoulders shake, he commences to weep, opening himself to vulnerability and pain as he does so and then I mount him violently from the rear, an *aaah!* of surprise and delight pouring from him and so I do it to him then, mounted, riding him, still holding the sword.

"You son of a bitch," I say, "I can do anything I want for the rest of my life because I inherited this money and this wonderful process has been invented and there is nothing, now there is absolutely *nothing* which can stop me from doing what I want to do."

"Yes," he says, "all right, you can, please don't hurt me, I'm at your mercy you see, just get it over with," and I get it over with, savage and quick strokes pouring into him, pouring into the receptionist, pouring into my mother and father, holding onto myself at the summit and screaming with epiphany. Enough insight and power here to be sure, enough to get me through at least forty-eight hours until the next session and I know in my heart that this has been the best ever as I struggle off his dead body. New territory opened up, the best ever, and the treatment, like my own soul and possibilities is endless, infinite.

"Free!" I shout to the technician as I surface. "Free!" I shout to the receptionist as I leave. "Free, free, free!" I call to a young girl on the street, pausing to seize her by the shoulders and stare so that I will have her features

memorized for the next session when (I decided with my new and profound sense of release) I will surely, surely possess her.

Because that is what it is all about.

—BARRY N. MALZBERG

## NIGHT SHIFT

(continued from page 53)

distasteful. That was Marshall's job, not his. So he avoided the subject, and the drive was a patchwork of meaningless noises and awkward silences.

It was not until they were almost there that the kid started in about the job again. Dennison listened politely. But inside he was muttering. Galleons. Romance. Far-off places and exotic cultures. Bah, he thought. Maybe Marshall was right. The kid was nice enough, but he was a little weird.

Finally, when they had pulled up to a stop in front of the kid's apartment complex, Dennison turned towards him. "No," he said. "You've got it all wrong."

The kid stopped in the middle of some hazily romantic generality. "How so?"

"Space isn't precisely like anything else," Dennison said carefully. "But it's certainly not the sea. Everybody thinks it is. But it's not. Spaceships aren't clipper ships, or whalers, or even tramp steamers. Nothing like that."

The kid got out of the car, and hesitated a moment, with the door open. "I think you're wrong," he said. "Maybe when I've worked around the port all summer I'll feel the same way. Maybe. But I hope not. Good night." He closed the door.

Dennison sat there for a second, debating whether he should call the kid back and tell him that he wouldn't even be working there next week, let alone all summer. No, he decided. Let him enjoy the weekend. Summer jobs are hard to find this year, so no sense upsetting him.

The kid vanished inside the building. Dennison restarted the car. He realized suddenly the kid had never bothered to ask him what he thought spaceships were.

"Trucks," he muttered, half to himself, half to the vanished kid. "Big fucking ugly trucks."

He pulled away from the curb, and decided to have a beer or two before heading home.

—GEORGE R. R. MARTIN

LINK (continued from page 63)

IN THE CLEAR cold air of Machu Pichu, improvised breeding sarcophagi turned

out twenty new citizens in each twenty-four hours.

—JOHN RANKINE

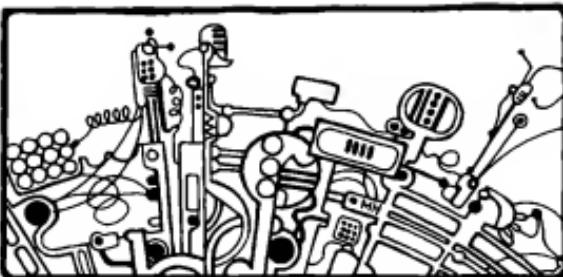
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# the Science

**GREG BENFORD  
& DAVID BOOK**

**...in Science  
Fiction**



## A HISTORY OF THE GREAT TACHYON FLAP

*With this installment, David Book regrettably bows out of this column. When I originally discussed the possibility of a column about the science in science fiction with Greg Benford (whose novel, "Jupiter Project," is as good an example as any of real science in sf), he and Dave were coworkers in the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory in Livermore, California and a collaboration seemed workable and inevitable. It was also fruitful: all the early columns were the joint effort of Benford and Book, and out of those columns have come articles and assignments for the two from *Science*, the Smithsonian, and other prestigious journals.*

*However, two years ago David Book left Livermore to come to Washington, D.C., and subsequently Greg Benford moved to southern California to teach physics at the University of California at Irvine. At this point they began trading the authorship of the columns between them, since collaboration, by no means impossible, became much less easy. In recent issues, Dave Book*

*wrote the majority of the columns, but the impending birth of his son, the purchase of a house, and the continuing press of his work made the column increasingly difficult for him to produce—while Benford, settling into a new position and new duties, temporarily put his work on the column to one side. The result was the absence of the column from the last two issues of this magazine—and Book's decision to make this one his last. Greg assures me that he will continue the column, but this installment will underline, I think, Book's considerable contribution. In this, a solo effort on his part, he describes a different sort of collaboration—and provides one of the best examples of the way in which "science" is actually done since *The Double Helix*. Tachyons have found great favor among sf writers in the last few years (dating largely from Gerald Feinberg's talk on the subject at a SFWA Nebula Awards Banquet). What follows is not only "A History of the Great Tachyon Flap," but perhaps the best explanation of what and why a tachyon is (or is not) which I have yet to encounter. I found Book's concluding thoughts particularly provocative.—tw*

On a summer day three years ago Bill Newcomb walked into my office gripping a copy of the May issue of *Physics Today* in his hand. "Have you seen this?" he asked. "This" was an article by two theoretical physicists named Bilaniuk and Sudarshan, called "Particles Beyond the Light Barrier." I told him I had glanced at it, but hadn't read it carefully.

Bill was surprised at my lack of interest. "How can you accept their conclusions? Their treatment of Tolman's Paradox is all wrong." He seemed to feel it was a serious matter. I told him I didn't know what Tolman's Paradox was.

So he explained. Suppose two people, *A* and *B*, are able to send messages that travel faster than light (FTL for short). Somewhere on earth one of them (*A*) sits at a transmitter. He sends out an FTL signal. The second man, *B*, is aboard a space ship moving away from earth at high speed (but not faster than light). The instant he receives *A*'s message, he sends a signal back using an identical FTL transmitter.

When does this second message get back to *A*? That depends. The message moves with a velocity greater than *c*, the speed of light. The space ship moves with a velocity less than *c*. It is possible (but not necessary) for the message velocity times the space ship velocity to be greater than *c* times itself. We can call such an exchange of messages a "Tolman sequence," after the man who first looked at the problem (in a book published in 1917). To take one example, the space ship might travel at a speed of one-tenth *c*, while the message traveled at one hundred times

*c*. Then the product of the two would be ten times as large as *c* squared, creating a Tolman sequence. In this situation, something quite extraordinary happens. *B*'s message gets back to *A* before *A* sends his own message out in the first place.

"Oh, that," I said. "I've heard of it before but I didn't know it was called Tolman's Paradox. How do you prove it?" Bill obligingly went through the proof. Later on, I'll sketch a rough outline of the argument. For the moment, though, I want to go on with my story.

At this point I went back and read the article in *Physics Today* carefully. It discussed FTL particles in terms of special relativity and coined the word "tachyon" (from the Greek word meaning "fast") to refer to them. A Columbia theoretician named Feinberg had reopened the question of the possible existence of such particles in a 1967 article in the *Physical Review*. Now Bilaniuk and Sudarshan claimed to have a theory of FTL particles which was free of any contradiction with well-established physical laws.

Their theory was built around a simple but clever idea. Suppose you saw a particle moving backward in time. How would it look? Say that at one o'clock the particle leaves an emitter. It reaches a detector on the other side of the lab one minute earlier, whereupon it is absorbed and disappears. What would you actually see? Well, you sit there in front of the equipment and watch the scopes. For a while nothing happens. Then at 12:59 the device you had been calling a detector goes "ding" or flashes or something. Suddenly a particle appears that wasn't

in evidence previously. At intervals in the next minute it registers on gauges spaced across the room, and finally it reaches the device you had been calling an emitter. "Ding" goes the emitter and the particle is no longer observable.

You naturally interpret what you have seen in conventional terms. The so-called detector emitted an ordinary particle which moved in an ordinary way, forward in time, until it got absorbed one minute later by the "emitter." Bilaniuk and Sudarshan called this the "reinterpretation principle."

In short, a particle moving backward in time will look to us exactly like a particle moving forward in time, but headed in the opposite direction. Hence no paradox can result. There is no way to send a message to your own past. So there is no reason why tachyons couldn't exist. At this stage, Bilaniuk and Sudarshan invoked the "totalitarian principle" popularized by Nobelelist Murray Gell-Mann—"whatever is not forbidden is compulsory"—and proposed to search experimentally for some sign of tachyons in the real world.

When I had finished the article, Bill and I wandered over to Greg Benford's office. Bill waved his copy of *Physics Today* in Greg's face and asked him what he thought of it. Greg answered noncommittally, and a conversation substantially identical with the first one followed. Both Greg and I agreed that "reinterpretation" took care of Tolman's Paradox nicely.

Now Bill told us what he was upset about. Reinterpretation worked fine for a single particle. . .but what about a *coherent* message? Suppose a series of

backward-in-time particles were fired off in such a way as to spell out something in Morse code. Going back to the original example, suppose *A* had never met or heard of *B*, and suppose *B*'s reply to *A*'s message was simply to type out his own name. According to the reinterpretation principle, this message looks as if it is coming from *A*. How then has *A* been able to learn *B*'s name? And who persuaded him to transmit it as his own message?

Bill proposed that the two of us join with him in writing a paper refuting the tachyon theory. With our known interest in science-fiction, we would certainly want to set the record straight. He would contribute most of the scientific ideas, and we would supply the polemics.

Bill didn't really need our help in writing the paper. But what needs explaining, I think, is why he wanted to write it in the first place. Bill Newcomb is a cautious, intense, introverted man with a strong instinct for doing his own thing. For years he has solved problems in one tiny corner of physics, magnetohydrodynamic (or MHD) stability theory, becoming the ranking world authority on his specialty. He publishes articles only after painstakingly polishing every sentence, and scarcely ever in collaboration with co-authors. But he reads widely in physics and mathematics outside his own field. Everything he is interested in he seems to have thoroughly mastered—so that if you ask him a question, the answer is either "I don't know" or a succinct informative lecture. One of his hobbies is chess; another is reading mysteries; another is logical problems and

paradoxes. (As it happens, he is the inventor of the problem—as yet unsolved—known to logicians as “Newcomb’s Paradox.”)

Probably this last interest is what urged him to forsake for a time his customary preserve. That, I imagine, and a contempt for sloppy workmanship. He felt that Bilaniuk and Sudarshan should be called to task for their mis-treatment of Tolman’s Paradox. Greg and I agreed.

We managed to put together our counter-argument in about a week. We titled the paper, “The Tachyonic Anti-telephone.” (This, of course, was just a way of getting attention.) The “anti-telephone” was a hypothetical device which would enable one to send messages into the past if tachyons behaved as B & S said they should.

The paper began with a summary of their claims and a statement of the Reinterpretation Principle. Then, by way of showing that the “light barrier” really is a barrier, we reviewed Tolman’s Paradox. The review followed Bill’s blackboard exposition very closely. It was quite elementary and transparent because we presented it in terms of Minkowski diagrams. Here is a Minkowski diagram (Fig. 1):

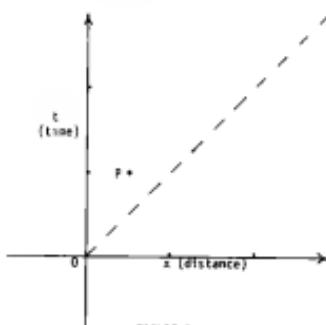


FIGURE 1

It is a map of space-time events. An event is something that happens somewhere, sometime. To make the diagram drawable on a sheet of paper, it includes only events along one direction (labelled “x”). I say where an event takes place by measuring how far away it is from a reference point, conveniently chosen to be the spot where I’m standing. I say when it happens by using my watch to tell how much time has elapsed since some reference time, which I call zero. The event labelled “O” is the origin that is, where I was standing at time zero.

Every event in space-time (as long as it lies in the x-direction) can be shown as a point on the Minkowski diagram. And every point on the diagram corresponds to a space-time event. For example, P denotes an event taking place 100,000 miles away from and one second later than the reference point O. (Each of the marks on the t-axis stands for one second; each of the marks on the x-axis stands for 186,000 miles, the distance light travels in a second. These are convenient units because we’re interested in speeds as fast as or faster than  $c$ .) The dotted line describes the propagation of a light ray. Since light travels one distance unit per second on this scale, all the events along the dotted line are equally distant from both axes. If I flash on a light at time zero, each point along the dotted line represents the instant in time at a particular point in space when the light first became visible.

Now suppose a second observer comes blasting right by me in a space ship moving in the x-direction, so that he passes the point where I’m standing

just at the instant I call time zero. Naturally, he'll measure distances by asking how far anything is from his instantaneous position. If he wants, he can map space-time events on his own Minkowski diagram. Let's say he sets his watch so that his definition of zero time agrees with mine. Then, just as I did, he can assign a time  $t'$  and a position  $x'$  to every event in the universe.

How would the coordinates on his map differ from mine? He is moving toward the right. The longer he waits to make a distance measurement, the smaller the answer he gets. If he waits long enough, events that are located at positive distances on my Minkowski diagram will be at negative distances (behind him) on his. That's just because he's passing their positions.

I can try to use my Minkowski diagram to work out what coordinates he measures. On my diagram, his path is a straight line of events, indicated in Fig. 2 by the sloping solid line through the point O:

To him, all events along his path have position  $x' = 0$ . He measures the location of an event in space by how far it lies in the  $x$ -direction from his location at the same time. So I can find this number graphically by drawing a line parallel to the sloping line and looking to see where it intersects the  $x$ -axis.

Right? No, wrong. The number so calculated is in accordance with what is known as a Galilean transformation. It describes the way physicists thought before Einstein. But this world-view omits a crucial experimental fact. If Fig. 2 were right, my light signal would seem to the moving observer to be travelling at less than 186,000 miles per second. But experiments show that the speed with which light propagates is the same when measured by *any* observer who is at rest or in uniform motion.

Einstein combined this fact with the requirement that the laws of physics not change for an observer in a state of uniform motion. By doing this, he was able to deduce a different transformation law. The result and its consequences are known as the "special theory of relativity." Every field of modern physics, from accelerator experiments to observations of galactic motion to solid-state circuit design backs up Einstein's theory. Since it—and not Galilean relativity—agrees with experiments and observations, scientists believe it correctly describes the world we live in.

According to special relativity, the way to compute the coordinates measured by the moving observer is shown in Fig. 3. Starting with Fig. 2,

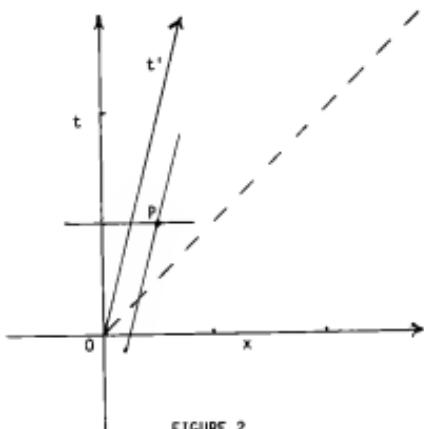


FIGURE 2

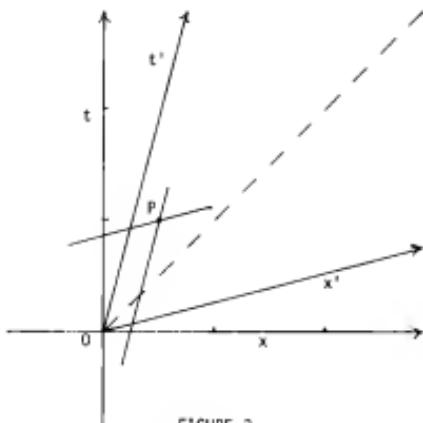


FIGURE 3

draw a second sloping line through O so that the dotted line (the path of the light ray) just bisects the angle made by the two sloping lines. These lines are called the  $t'$  and  $x'$  axes. To find the values the moving observer measures for the time and position of the event P, draw lines through P parallel to the  $x'$  and  $t'$  axes. The intersection of the  $t$  axis and the line parallel to the  $x'$  axis defines a number  $t'$ . The intersection of the  $x$  axis and the line parallel to the  $t'$  axis defines a second number,  $x'$ . The desired spacetime coordinates are  $x'$  and  $t'$ .

There's a lot going on or implied in this little diagram. For one thing, even though the moving observer and I synchronized watches at time zero, he sees events taking place at different times than I do. If he rings a bell at what seem to him to be one-second intervals, the intervals will seem longer to me. (This is the relativistic time-dilation effect.) For another, the length he calls one meter will look shorter to me (Lorentz contraction). These effects become more and more striking as his

velocity with respect to me is increased. They would become catastrophic if this velocity reached  $c$ . (Hence Bilaniuk and Sudarshan note that a slower-than-light particle can never become a tachyon, and a tachyon can never turn into a slower-than-light particle.) But both the moving observer and I always see light travelling at the same speed, 186,000 miles per second.

Where does Tolman's paradox come in? Let's draw a Minkowski diagram showing the FTL communication between A and B described earlier (Fig. 4).

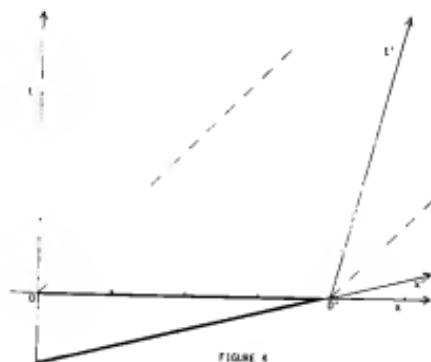


FIGURE 4

The  $x$ - $t$  axes show A's view of events, the  $x'$ - $t'$  axes show B's. Both men see the same events, but they see them happening in general at different times and different places, as they reckon time and distance. B is far away from A (not passing right by), so they have to synchronize watches by some sort of prearrangement. Let's say that they agree to start their watches at the instant when they are four light-seconds apart (four times the distance light travels in one second, about three quarters of a million miles) in A's coordinate system. So the origin O' of B's

coordinate system is not identical with  $O$ , but lies four distance units away.

For simplicity, let's take the tachyons to be going much faster than light—so much faster that their speed is effectively infinite as seen by the sender. (It will be clear that they don't have to be infinitely fast for Tolman's Paradox to arise. This assumption just makes the picture easier to draw.) In the figure, I've indicated the tachyon trajectory by a heavy line. Thus the initial message follows the positive  $x$ -axis, and the return message follows the negative  $x'$ -axis. But surprise! this means the return message intersects  $A$ 's world line *before*  $t = 0$ . Conclusion: FTL implies backward-in-time communication.

Having completed all the preliminary spadework, we were now ready to build our antitelephone. The next section of the paper told how to do this. Of course, it didn't pretend to give real engineering details. Our antitelephone is an idealization. In principle, a real mechanical device could be built to work the same way—if tachyons really existed.

The antitelephone incorporates three elements, all present in a typical tachyon-hunting experiment: a tachyon "source" that can be turned on and off; a tachyon detector; and a velocity filter, to let pass only tachyons of a single speed, moving in a single direction. Then, to quote from our paper.

We assume the components (1) - (3) are combined to produce a source of tachyons with some standard velocity  $V$ , greater than  $c$  (called a  $V$  emitter), and a detector which registers the absorption of tachyons of velocity  $V$  (a  $V$  detector). Given these  $V$  emitters

and  $V$  detectors, we now construct another type of transmitter and receiver.

We attach a series of emitters ( $E_1$ ,  $E_2$ , ...,  $E_n$ ) to a conveyor belt, as shown in Fig. 5. The wheels of the conveyor are fixed on axes rigidly pinned to the laboratory table. By turning the wheels at an appropriate rate, the emitters can in principle be given any desired velocity between  $-c$  and  $+c$  as measured in the laboratory frame. We may also fix to the side of each emitter a small computer pre-programmed with a desired message to be fed into the modulator of the emitter's tachyon beam. This eliminates any difficulty associated with transmission of the message from the laboratory to the moving emitter. Let the whole system be considered as a new source, fixed in the laboratory frame, and let  $V$  be the outgoing velocity. Then  $V$  can be given any value outside the interval from  $-c$  to  $+c$ .

Similarly, let the  $V$  sources on the conveyor belt be replaced with  $V$  detectors. Then the whole system will operate as a  $V$  detector, where  $V$  covers the same velocity range as before. The incoming message is read by the attached computers, and recorded for the benefit of the experimenter, to be read by him after the conveyor belt is brought to rest.

Our two experimenters,  $A$  and  $B$ , can be given each a  $V$  emitter and a  $V$  detector. For simplicity, let them both be at rest in the same reference frame [note the difference between this and my example of one man on Earth and one in a space ship].

though separated by a finite distance. Finite delays are involved in the programming of *A*'s computer, in setting his conveyor belt in motion, in bringing *B*'s to rest, and in reading out the received message. However, these are independent of the distance between *A* and *B*. They can be made negligible by making the latter sufficiently large.

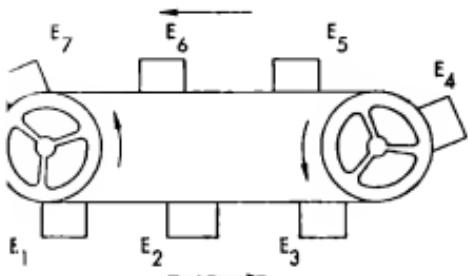


FIGURE 5

So there it is. As is clear, the conveyor belt just takes the place of the relative velocity between the two observers in the previous examples. Using the antitelephone, *any* two individuals, whether stationary or moving, could exchange backward-in-time messages. In the remainder of the paper, we showed the kind of paradoxes that could result from the existence of an antitelephone, despite any amount of "reinterpretation." For example,

The paradoxes of backward-in-time communication are well known. Suppose *A* and *B* enter into the following agreement: *A* will send a message at three o'clock if and only if he does *not* receive one at one o'clock. *B* sends a message to reach *A* at one o'clock im-

mediately on receiving one from *A* at two o'clock. Thus the exchange of messages will take place if and only if it does not take place. This is a genuine paradox, a causal contradiction.

Our closing words were, "we must conclude that tachyon experiments of this type can only yield negative results." With that we shook hands all around and sent the manuscript off to the *Physical Review*. We were pleased with ourselves because we had succeeded in spotting a blunder and then setting matters straight in simple, convincing fashion. Although it contained no great novelty, our paper was pleasingly short and clear. It didn't have a single equation in it.

Six weeks later it came back to us, rejected.

All the big physics journals have similar editorial practices. The editor (who is unqualified to pass judgement on all the esoteric stuff that crosses his desk, even if he had time), sends out each article to a referee. The latter, chosen in some mysterious fashion known only to editors, has presumably done work in the same or related fields in the past. He reads the manuscript and recommends acceptance, publication with minor changes, a major overhaul, or outright rejection. The editor usually accepts his verdict. When this is the third or fourth recommendation; the authors have two choices: they can squawk, or give up hope of publishing in that journal.

We squawked. We asked that the manuscript be sent to a second referee. Another month went by, and back it came. This time the comments were even more negative.

We still weren't ready to give up. What really brought out our stubborn streak was the nature of the referees' objections. They didn't find fault with our argument; instead, they tried to shore up the imperiled theory. They patched the original version up, using ideas that had never been published, and then said something like, "Well, if the authors can find anything wrong with this version, let them rewrite the paper. Then maybe it could be published." There was a strong hint that the referees felt they were defending their own territory, which we were attacking. Their attitude seemed to be that since they were right, we must be wrong; and this justified their refusal to let our article into print. We suspected (rightly or wrongly) that the two referees were Feinberg or one of his students and Bilaniuk or Sudarshan.

As the year wore on, developments multiplied on other fronts. The article in *Physics Today* had aroused widespread interest, with dozens of researchers rushing to support or assail the fledgling theory. The editors announced that the December issue would contain a selection of letters critical of the tachyon doctrines, followed by replies from Bilaniuk and Sudarshan.

One of the letters was from Newcomb; he addressed himself to a point not treated in our paper. Among the many bizarre properties ascribed to tachyons, one stands out especially. The more energy they have, the slower they move. As the energy of a tachyon approaches infinity, its velocity gets closer and closer to  $c$ . Contrariwise, the less energy they have, the faster they move. In the May article, Bilaniuk and

Sudarshan claimed that as a result of one thing or another, a tachyon would always lose energy. Finally it would reach a "transcendent state," in which it travelled with infinite velocity. In his letter Bill noted that to an observer in a moving frame of reference, the tachyon would not be transcendent (see Fig. 4). Hence it could not be correct to say tachyons always evolved to a transcendent state.

Two other letters (by Yoshikawa, an experimentalist on the staff of Princeton's controlled thermonuclear fusion laboratory, and DeWitt, a relativity theorist) made essentially the same point as we had in our aborted paper. The replies put forward by Bilaniuk and Sudarshan failed to dispose of the objections; in the case of Newcomb's comment, their rebuttal said little more than "very interesting; but this is no serious problem." They did not even appear to have thought hard about it. Then, with sublime self-confidence, they used the rest of their space to report the latest word on current tachyon detection experiments.

About this time we learned that the authors of an especially controversial paper had succeeded in getting it published by having a big-name physicist write a covering letter saying how worthwhile he thought it was. So, while continuing to submit and resubmit the article through conventional channels, we also set out to enlist in our behalf the aid of Edward Teller, associate director of the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory. Teller, a brilliant Hungarian of the Wigner-Szilard-Von Neumann vintage, is known (rather inaccurately) to newspapermen as the

"Father of the H-bomb." His work has ranged widely over many provinces of physics. If any personal endorsement could help us, his could.

We made an appointment and trooped over to Teller's plush (by physicists' standards) office with our manuscript and referees' comments. Teller read the paper and pronounced the reasoning sound. And he liked the way we had written it. He was particularly taken with the absence of equations. "Nobody knows how to write papers like this anymore," he said. "When I was a student, scientists tried to write so people could understand what they had done." He agreed to help us. With that he picked up his phone and called one of the editors of the *Physical Review* to recommend immediate publication. The editor was receptive but would not fully commit himself. Undismayed by this check to his frontal assault, Teller made plans to mount a full-scale siege. He suggested a minor change in the draft and invited us to come back in a week.

When we showed up for our second interview, Teller was again friendly and helpful. But, having thought it over for a week, he now thought the paper needed further additions. His idea was to redo the whole thing, elaborating greatly on the causality. This would make it a much better paper. Then, he informed us, he would be glad to write a covering letter which would get the article into the *Physical Review*.

We thanked him and left. In private we agreed that Teller's suggestions were just as unpalatable and unsuited to our purposes as the referees' had been. So we quietly shelved the

covering letter idea.

By now we were experiencing various levels of desperation. It was January. The journals were chock-full of tachyon articles—pro, con, experimental, theoretical, quantum mechanical, statistical. Three or four—all submitted later than ours—appeared presenting the same causality argument we used. Nobody came forward to offer a convincing rejoinder. We felt the case against tachyons was overwhelming, but that didn't stop experimentalists from looking for the things. Nor did it keep far-out theorists from studying tachyon-photon interactions and constructing unified theories of tachonic gravitational fields.

Reading in the abstract of one paper that the author had determined how many tachyons could dance on the head of a pin (or something of the sort), I asked Bill what the author thought he was doing. Bill agreed it was depressing to read such drivel. He pointed out, though, that in a sense, it didn't really matter. There are plenty of precedents in physics journals of earlier decades. People would write (and take seriously) learned articles built upon the grossest blunders. When experiments failed to confirm the astonishing predictions these gave rise to, their adherents lost interest. Finally the whole affair would be forgotten. . .and so it would be with tachyons. If experimenters found no tachyons, even the most wild-eyed enthusiasts would finally give up. (And of course, if they did find evidence in favor of tachyons, we'd all have something to think about.)

Thus it came as an anticlimax when our article finally got accepted. By this

time, four referees had read it, and their collected comments were longer than the article itself. It duly appeared in the July 15, 1970, issue of *Phys Rev* and promptly sank into oblivion. Few articles have referred to it and it seems to have influenced the course of almost nobody's research. The pro-tachyon physicists are still pro, and the anti-tachyon crowd are still anti.

When I started thinking about writing this article last month, I went to the library where I looked up "tachyons" in the journal collection. There were 31 articles listed for 1970 and 32 for 1971. Most of them were new to me. I glanced through a few. All the reported experiments had drawn blanks. Most of the theoretical papers rang the changes on elaborate mathematical formalisms, discussing how tachyons behave under extreme or idealized conditions (if they exist). Some still batted the causality question around. All in all, I thought I noticed that the flagging of interest Newcomb had foretold was setting in.

About the only tangible result our article ever achieved was to get my name on a new set of preprint distribution lists. It's the custom for authors to send their manuscripts around before journal publication to a select circle of specialists likely to be interested in the work. In red-hot research fields (like tachyons), an article is old hat by the time the journal comes around. Every once in a while I get a preprint sent from someone I never heard of before, in Israel or Indiana, featuring a new proof of the non-existence of tachyons or a new cosmological theory of the origin of the

universe based on them.

Last week I got one from Princeton, along with a note from a former professor of mine, Martin Kruskal. The note said he "thought this might interest you." It did. The author is a student of Martin's named Gott. He tackled not the question of how tachyons behave, but what a tachyon is. He showed there are solutions to Einstein's gravitational field equations describing FTL motions. They manifest themselves as anomalies in gravitational fields (like the gravitational pull in the neighborhood of ordinary matter). But there's a difference. With tachyons, something is moving faster than light, but it's not an *object*. It's a relationship, a geometrical abstraction. Gott explains it with a simple analogy:

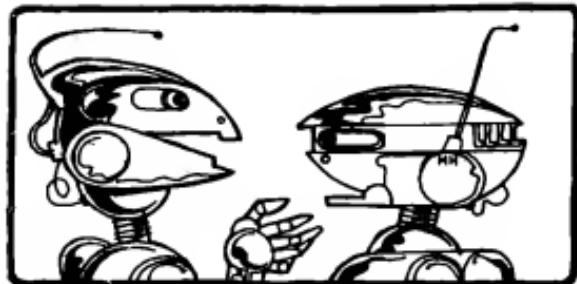
What is happening here is just the "scissors" effect. It is often said that we can make the intersection point of the blades of a pair of scissors move faster than the speed of light even though the velocity of the blades never exceeds the velocity of light. While the intersection point does move with velocity greater than  $c$ , no information is transmitted with velocity greater than  $c$ .

I think this is the answer to the elusive tachyon. It moves faster than light all right, but it isn't there. It's only a shadow of itself cast on the face of the universe.

The world will be a tidier place without the more tangible variety of tachyons. All the same, I will miss them, and I think most readers will share my regret. Now the great Inter-galactic Tachyonic Telecommunications System will never be built. The

(continued on page 127)

**BOB SHAW  
& WALT WILLIS**  
**the**  
**Clubhouse**



## THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR

by Bob Shaw & Walt Willis  
(part two)

*This issue *The Clubhouse* continues the four-part serialization of the classic allegory describing the progress of Jophan through Fandom. In part one Jophan, a bookish resident of Mundane, is given a vision of Fandom and a Shield of Umor (a sense of humor) and set out to find his way across the mountains to Trufandom, where he hopes to find the Enchanted Duplicator and publish the Perfect Fanzine. He finds many curious people also crossing the mountains and learns from them some of the dangers and temptations which threaten to divert anyone seeking Trufandom. Now across the mountains, he finds himself in a vast Jungle of Inexperience. (Footnotes will be found at the end of this installment.)*

### CHAPTER SEVEN: IN WHICH JOPHAN ENCOUNTERS THE DENIZENS OF THE JUNGLE

On the next day Jophan observed a phenomenon which had hitherto escaped his notice. Here and there through the jungle were large swathes of flattened vegetation which bore the appearance of having been made by some huge monster which had smashed through the jungle and left a wake of uprooted vines and splintered trees. Alarmed by this ominous sight he warned his companions to keep

together and to proceed with caution. But it was without avail, for as the day wore on first one of them and then another would grow impatient and stride on by himself. Others, again, would be unable to keep up the pace of the rest of the band and would fall discouraged and exhausted by the side of the path. From time to time Jophan tried to encourage these fainthearts, but he was amazed to notice that once they started to retrace their footsteps they seemed to disappear almost instantly from sight. He reflected that if the way

into Fandom were as swift and comfortable as the way out, he would feel a great deal happier.

So it was that by the middle of the afternoon Jophan found himself alone on the path. He occasionally caught up with one of those who had rushed on ahead, but each of them had either fallen victim to one of the countless perils of the jungle or had collapsed in a state of complete exhaustion from their reckless expenditure of energy. Several of them he found crushed and bleeding in one of the swathes he had noticed before, and Jophan wondered with trepidation what sort of monster was this which could create such havoc by its mere passing. He kept an anxious watch on the path ahead but it was difficult to see far because of the swirling vapours that constantly rose from the dank vegetation. Jophan marvelled that in his first rapturous view of Fandom he had failed to perceive any sign of this dreadful jungle whose extent seemed to be almost boundless.

This thoughtful state of mind was rudely shattered by a dreadful crashing sound like that of the stampede of a hundred elephants, and the trees further down the path split asunder. Raising his Shield of Umor as bravely as he might, Jophan stared intently into the steaming jungle.

A cold shadow of terror fell across him as he failed to see any cause for either the sound or the crushing of trees. The Thing appeared to be invisible. As the mysterious trampling sound drew nearer it took all of Jophan's courage to stand his ground. But then, as he peered ever more intently ahead, he suddenly perceived

that it was not one great monster which was advancing on him, but a horde of smaller ones. His difficulty in seeing them at first was, he now realized, due to the fact that their markings and coloring resembled so closely those of their surroundings. They were, he could see now, hideous creatures resembling warthogs, but much heavier, and with dreadful spikes protruding all over their squat bodies.

As they drew near, Jophan's eye was caught by one of the Neofen who had earlier rushed on ahead and now lay by the side of the path recovering his strength. As Jophan watched, the Neofan got to his feet to resume his journey, and unable to see the monsters, staggered abruptly into the path without looking where he was going. Jophan shouted a warning, but the creatures had already seen their victim. Their little red eyes gleaming cruelly, they changed direction and bore down mercilessly on the unfortunate Neofan, brushing aside his Shield of Umor and crushing his bleeding body to the ground.

When Jophan saw that the Shield of Umor was of no avail against the monsters he was overcome with fear and would have turned to flee had not a wondrous thing occurred. In the distance he heard the sound of golden trumpets, and beside him the voice of the Spirit of Fandom.

"Stay, Jophan," she whispered. "Do not run. These beasts you see are called typos and their attention is attracted by sudden movement. If you proceed slowly and with care you will not be troubled by them."

Despite this assurance Jophan was

wary of passing the monsters, which were now moving slowly along the side of the trail as if watching for more unsuspecting Neofen. "But," he protested, "what if one of their spikes should accidentally strike me? The trail lies very close to them and they are difficult to detect in the undergrowth."

"If you go carefully enough this will not happen," said the Fairy confidently. "However, to set your mind at rest, here is a bottle of magic liquid called Correction Fluid. A touch of this will instantly heal any wound made by a typo." At these words a tiny blue bottle appeared in the air before Jophan. Clutching it in his hand, he walked carefully past the herd and resumed his journey.<sup>1</sup>

#### CHAPTER EIGHT: IN WHICH JOPHAN MEETS TWO STRANGE NEOFEN

In the days that followed, Jophan saw and heard many hordes of Typos blundering through the jungle but, thanks to the Fairy's advice, he came to no harm. One day, however, he came upon a small herd of them on the path in front of him, moving slowly in the same direction as he. He overtook them carefully, meaning to pass unobserved, when to his horror he noticed that there was a Neofan in their midst. He was about to call out a warning when he perceived that the Neofan was sitting, apparently unharmed, on a crude hurle which was actually being borne along by the Typos. At this sight Jophan cried out in astonishment, upon which the Neofan turned round and greeted him cheerily.

"Good morning, friend," he said. "What is your name and whither are

you bound?"

"My name is Jophan," said Jophan, "and I am on my way to Trufandom to obtain the Enchanted Duplicator and produce the Perfect Fanzine."

"I also," said the Neofan. "My name is Kerles. Would you care to ride with me?"

"No, thank you," replied Jophan without hesitation. "To tell the truth I should be afraid of these horrible creatures."

"Horrible?" laughed Kerles. "Everyone fights shy of me on account of these Typos, but actually they are quite agreeable fellows. Look, they will even do tricks for me."

So saying, he stretched out his Shield of Umor, which was large and brilliantly polished, and gave a word of command. Instantly several of the Typos jumped neatly over the shield, performing somersaults and such other odd antics that Jophan burst out laughing.

"See?" said Kerles. "Quite cheerful fellows, really. I don't understand why people dislike them so much."

Jophan was impressed, but he noticed that while Kerles was admittedly saving energy by this mode of travel, he was not proceeding very quickly. Moreover, every now and then the Typos would wander off into the jungle, from which they were brought back with such difficulty that Kerles seemed in constant danger of losing his way altogether. Jophan felt it was impossible to press the beasts into any really useful service, and, reluctant to remain in the presence of the ugly creatures, bade Kerles a friendly farewell.<sup>2</sup>

He had not gone very far when he

perceived another traveller on the path, and hurried to overtake him. By the speed with which he was able to do so he surmised that the other was standing still, but when he caught up with him he found that such was not the case. The Neofan was in fact moving forwards, but so slowly that quite a considerable time elapsed between steps. This time the Neofan seemed to spend in consulting various books from a pile which he carried under one arm, and in clearing away every tiny frond from the margin of the path before he ventured forward. On the Neofan's back was a huge rucksack which appeared to be crammed full with heavy objects, and a bundle of peculiarly-shaped swords, walking-sticks and umbrellas. Jophan's curiosity was aroused by this extraordinary mass of equipment and he addressed the Neofan politely.

"Good afternoon, friend," he said. "My name is Jophan, and I am on my way to obtain the Magic Mimeograph and publish the Perfect Fanzine. Could you please tell me what are these things you're carrying?"

"Good afternoon," said the Neofan. "These," he said proudly, pointing to the books, "are my guides. These swords and things are for cutting, shading, burnishing, and so on. A large number of all these are absolutely essential if one is to find one's way through this jungle safely. Although," he added mournfully, "I didn't want to come this way at all. I would have gone by the Letterpress Railroad if I had had enough money. My name is Perfexion, and I too—"

At this point there was a rustling noise in the undergrowth and, panic-

stricken, the Neofan threw all his belongings to the ground. Rummaging in his rucksack he pulled out a peculiar-looking article made of wood and glass. Holding this to his eye, he peered intently into the jungle.

After some moments he was apparently satisfied, and put the instrument back in his rucksack.

"What was that thing you were looking through?" asked Jophan curiously.

"That was my 'scope," said Perfexion. "I use it to watch out for those . . . animals."

"You mean the Typos?" asked Jophan.

The Neofan seemed terrified by the mere utterance of the word and stared hauntedly into the jungle.

"Yes," he whispered fearfully. "Those dreadful Things. Er . . . would you like to travel with me? It would be so much safer if we could both watch out for . . . Them."

Jophan was filled with pity for the timorous Neofan, but he realized he would make very slow progress in his company.

"Thank you," he said kindly, "but I'd rather just take my chances with the Typos. I want to get on."

He shook hands with the neofan and continued on his way. At the next bend in the path he turned round to give a friendly wave, but Perfexion was so busy with his equipment that he did not notice.

Jophan slept fitfully that night, his mind occupied with the events of the day, and was up and on his way before daylight the next morning. So adept had he become at negotiating the

jungle, and so dexterous at avoiding the Typos, that he had covered a considerable distance before the sun rose above the horizon. When it did so Jophan saw to his delight that the jungle seemed to be coming to an end. The trees were further apart, the undergrowth less dense, and the path stretched invitingly in front of him, clear and well-marked. Jophan broke into an eager run.

#### CHAPTER NINE: IN WHICH JOPHAN ENCOUNTERS THE HUCKSTERS

In a few minutes he was standing, breathless with excitement rather than exertion, at the very edge of the jungle. Before him he saw a broad well-surfaced road which ran gently through a fertile plain, towards where in the far distance gleamed the towers and spires of a splendid city. A few yards ahead of the point where he was standing a myriad of tracks such as the one he had travelled converged together to make the road, as countless tiny tributaries form a great river. Along these paths as Jophan watched, other Neofen came running with glad cries, to dash along the road in the direction of the shining city.

Mindful of the unseen perils to which such over-eager Neofen had fallen victims on a previous occasion Jophan resolved to be on his guard, and followed the others more soberly.

It soon became obvious that he was approaching civilization. Although the city itself was still far away there were great hoardings [billboards] in the fields by the side of the road covered with brightly-colored advertisements from various establishments in the city.

Jophan read each of these, impressed despite himself at the attractions they had to offer.

While he was staring at a particularly large and brilliant hoarding he was startled to hear what sounded like a cry of pain from behind it. Vaulting the low fence by the side of the road, Jophan quickly ran behind the hoarding. There, running around in little circles and uttering heart-rending cries of anguish, was one of the Neofen he had seen that morning. Jophan was horrified to see the change which had come over him. His once ruddy face had taken on a dreadful pallor, and his body was emaciated almost beyond recognition. Before Jophan could reach him the Neofan collapsed on the ground and began to moan piteously.

Jophan ran and knelt by his side. The Neofan looked up at him wanly. "Too late. . ." he murmured, ". . . dying . . . beware . . . don't buy . . ." His lips continued to move but no sound came forth.

"Don't but what?" asked Jophan anxiously.

The Neofan summoned up his last reserves of strength. ". . . tin bug," he whispered. Then his eyes closed and he ceased to breathe. Jophan saw that he was dead and consigned his soul to the Happy Fanning Ground. Then, tenderly, he commenced to arrange the body in a more seemly position.

No sooner had he raised the Neofan's shoulders from the ground than Jophan started back in horror. There, on the back of the corpse, was clamped a hideous leech-like creature, bloated with the life-blood of its victim. Aghast, Jophan dropped the body and

stumbled back to the road.

So stunned was he by the horror of what he had seen that it was some time before Jophan had recovered himself sufficiently to resume his journey. Even then he was still worried and perplexed as to the meaning of the Neofan's warning, for so far in his travelling along the road he had seen no establishment where anything might be bought.

This last problem was solved when in a few moments he rounded a slight bend in the road. He had arrived at a crossroads where among a small forest of hoardings there clustered a group of hucksters' stalls. They were heaped with gaily colored and attractive objects, and behind each stall stood a huckster loudly proclaiming the merits of his wares.

As Jophan walked past, one of them accosted him ingratiatingly. "Greetings, young sir," he said, rubbing his hands together. "Might I make so bold as to inquire your name and destination?"

"My name is Jophan," said Jophan guardedly, "and I am on my way to Trufandom to obtain the Magic Mi-mograph and produce the Perfect Fanzine."

"Then I have just the thing for you," exclaimed the huckster. "It is a long journey on which you have embarked, and a lonely one. Why not take one of these adorable little pets to beguile the tedious hours?"

With these words he held up a transparent case in which reposed a captivating jewel-like creature resembling a ladybird, gaily colored and beautiful to look upon. Its appearance

so fascinated Jophan that his hand went involuntarily to his pocket. "What do you call it?" he asked, in a last effort at caution.

"It's a Kolektinbug," said the huckster, holding out his hand for Jophan's money.

With the meaning of the Neofan's warning now made hideously clear to him, Jophan backed away from the deadly little creature and its insidious temptation. "No, thank you," he said. "I... I've changed my mind."

Pursued by the curses and imprecations of the thwarted hucksters, Jophan continued steadfastly on his way to Trufandom, pausing only at one of the less pretentious establishments to replenish his provisions.<sup>4</sup>

#### CHAPTER TEN: IN WHICH JOPHAN COMES TO THE CITY

It now became obvious that the hucksters' settlement had been merely the outskirts of the great city. The towers and spires which Jophan had seen that morning now loomed directly ahead, and the green fields had completely disappeared behind a great wall of hoardings. Shortly these in turn gave place to a region of large barracks-like buildings, each backed by stretches of bare concrete and separated from one another by barbed wire fences.

As Jophan entered this district a great number of people came running out of the buildings to welcome him, pressing gifts into his hands, clapping him on the back and offering him hospitality. Meanwhile, others shouted greetings from the windows of the buildings and showered him with pieces of paper of varying size and in such

profusion that Jophan could scarce see his way in front of him. He caught one of the pieces as it fell and saw that the message emblazoned across it was the same as that which was being shouted by most of the people around him. "WELCOME TO TRUFANDOM," it proclaimed. Jophan turned it over and found that the other side consisted of an advertisement for a club for fans, which was evidently what these buildings were. Curious, he turned his steps towards the nearest one. At once a huge howl of rage arose from the representatives of other clubs, and they shouted at him and plucked his garment in an attempt to divert his footsteps. However, reinforcements quickly arrived from the club in whose direction he was proceeding and he was hustled inside.

There his new friends welcomed him effusively and asked him his name. "My name is Jophan," said Jophan, "and I am on my way to Trufandom to obtain the Enchanted Duplicator and produce the Perfect Fanzine."

They looked horrified. "Do you mean," asked one of them, "that you were actually going to attempt that journey *by yourself*?"

"Yes," said Jophan diffidently.

"But my poor fellow," said the other, "that is quite impossible. You must, absolutely must belong to a club before you can ever think about such an undertaking. Here we will train you for the journey, outfit you with all the necessary equipment, and in time send you out as part of a properly organized expedition. *That* is the way to go about such things," he added proudly.

"How long will it take?" asked

Jophan.

"Training is going on this very moment in the exercise yard," said the other impressively. "But first let me show you the benefits our club has to offer you."

He smiled kindly to Jophan and turned to speak to one of the other club members. Jophan could not hear what the latter said, but he saw him shake his head and point to another member. He in turn pointed to yet another with a great deal of muttering and whispering, and soon they were all arguing bitterly among themselves. Every now and then one of them would stamp angrily out of the room, slamming the door behind him, but another always seemed to come in to take his place. This went on for a long time, and they seemed to have forgotten all about Jophan. He rose from his seat, tiptoed quietly out of the other door of the room, and found himself in the exercise yard.

Marching up and down the yard was a line of several dozen Neofan, under the supervision of a drill instructor. When they came to the barbed wire fence at one side the instructor would shout, "About face," and they would turn round and march to the other side of the yard, where the process was repeated. Jophan watched for some considerable time, but this seemed to form the sole activity. At length one of the Neofan fell out of line and walked tiredly over to Jophan.

"One gets a little bored with it at times," he said rather shamefacedly.

"I thought you were quite right," said Jophan. "I never saw anything so pointless in my life."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," replied the

other defensively. "You see, there's to be an election shortly, and then it'll be the turn of one of *us* to give the orders. Why it might be *me*," he added eagerly.

"But how will all this help you to get to Trufandom?" asked Jophan.

"Trufandom?" said the other, astonished. "Why, *this* is Trufandom! . . . Isn't it?"

"It is not," said Jophan firmly, and proceeded to impart to the Neofan something of the glory of the vision he had experienced from the touch of the wand called Fanac.

The Neofan passed his hand dazedly across his forehead. "Yes . . ." he said, "I do remember something like that. But I've been here so long I'd quite forgotten it."

"Leave all this marching up and down," urged Jophan. "It will never get you anywhere. Come with me to Trufandom."

"I'm not sure I'm strong enough yet for such a journey," said the Neofan hesitantly. "Maybe I had better let the club help me."

"No," said Jophan. "I am only a Neofan, but I know this: that the journey to Trufandom is one which must be accomplished by a Fan's unaided efforts."

"But," pleaded the Neofan, "couldn't you wait until after this election . . . or maybe the one after it?"

"No," said Jophan firmly. "I must be on my way." He waited for a moment to see if the Neofan would change his mind, and then left him reluctantly. He slipped back again into the building, through the room where the organizers were still arguing, and back into the street, still unnoticed.

Then, brushing aside the crowd of well-meaning organizers and welcomers with a friendly but firm arm, he continued on his way to the center of the city.

The buildings now began to take on a more and more elegant appearance, and became ever higher and more imposing. The streets became broader and more smoothly paved. At each intersection the vistas were more and more beautiful and awe-inspiring, until at last he reached the center of the city.

Jophan knew this was the center of the city for the simple reason that his instinct told him that there could not be anything more beautiful still in store. He found himself in a broad, gleaming thoroughfare, beautifully paved. On either side there towered shining marble skyscrapers, their pinnacles plunging into the very heavens. It was all so wonderful that Jophan could do nothing but stand there motionless, breathless with admiration. This he thought to himself, must be Trufandom. True, it was not as the Fairy had led him to expect, but he could not imagine that anything more wonderful could exist.

#### CHAPTER ELEVEN: IN WHICH JOPHAN LEARNS THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CITY

As he stood at the entrance to the great avenue, still transfixed with awe, a dapper, bespectacled young man came up to him. He eyed Jophan's tattered garments somewhat askance, but spoke to him civilly enough.

"Good day," he said. "Might I enquire your name?"

"My name is Jophan," said Jophan humbly, "and I was on my way to

Trufandom..."

"You need go no further," said the young man. "Perhaps you would like me to show you around the city. My name is Dedwood," he added proudly, "and I am one of the City Planners. I am a Serious Construction Engineer by profession."

Taking Jophan's arm, he led him along the street, pointing out one great building after another. Before they had reached the end of the avenue Jophan was, if possible, even more overcome with admiration, but he began to feel out of place in all this elegance with his dirty clothes and tarnished shield. As Dedwood was pointing out yet another imposing building he took the opportunity to give the shield a surreptitious rub with his handkerchief.

"This," Dedwood was saying, "is the Federation Building—"

He broke off in alarm as a strangled sound came from his listening companion. In wiping his shield Jophan had caught a glimpse of the reflection of the building on its surface, and had been unable to suppress a cry of astonishment. Reflected in the shield was not the imposing edifice of the Federation Building, but a ramshackle affair, in visible danger of falling into the street. Seen in the mirror of the shield, the building was not even soundly constructed, but disfigured by cracks and faulty workmanship. Even so, Jophan would have been half inclined to dismiss the reflection as the result of a distortion on the shield's surface, had not the thought suddenly occurred to him that not once had he been allowed to see inside one of the buildings.

Before Dedwood could stop him, Jophan darted through the door of the Federation Building. As he had by now half suspected, it was not a building at all, but a mere facade. Although it reached high into the air, it was but a few inches thick and obviously unstable. Even as Jophan watched a little gust of wind produced several dangerous-looking cracks in the flimsy structure. At the splintering sound, two harassed Neosen appeared, pushing a tall scaffolding before them on wheels. Stopping close to the wall, they clambered up and hastily filled the cracks with cement. Then they pushed the scaffolding along to the next danger point, working more and more feverishly as the cracks seemed to grow in number more rapidly than they could be repaired.

Jophan tore his eyes away from this depressing sight, and went outside again. Dedwood was still standing on the sidewalk, but he now had an almost guilty expression on his face.

Jophan faced him accusingly. "What is the idea of all this?" he demanded brusquely, annoyed at having been taken in by such a senseless deception.

"Well, you see," said Dedwood awkwardly, "it's to impress the Public. They wouldn't be impressed by Trufandom, so some of us thought we'd erect this city of Serious Constructivism to give them a better idea of our importance..."

"But surely the Public never come into Fandom?" protested Jophan.

"Well, no," admitted Dedwood, "but they sometimes send a representative in, usually a Mr. Press."

He seemed to have difficulty in

meeting Jophan's gaze, and the reflection from Jophan's Shield of Umor seemed to be hurting his eyes, so that while he was talking he glanced sideways up and down the street.

Abruptly he broke off with a cry of excitement. "Why, there he is now!" he exclaimed. "This is a great day..."

The rest of his words were lost as he ran helter-skelter down the street to where a little man with a notebook had appeared as if from nowhere, accompanied by another little man with an easel under his arm.

Jophan followed more slowly and found Dedwood already talking volubly to the stranger, while the other little man set up his easel and began making sketches. At great length Dedwood expatiated on the glories of the City, on the Magnificent Work that was being accomplished there, on the grandeur of its buildings, on the intelligence and forethought of the inhabitants, on their sobriety of deportment and the importance of their work to Humanity, on the various functions and important duties they performed, and on the contribution he himself made to these mighty achievements. Jophan noticed, however, that the little man was writing very little of all this down in his notebook, and as Dedwood drew to the close of his impressive oration he sidled behind Mr. Press and looked over his shoulder. The page was perfectly blank except for one cryptic sentence which Jophan could not understand. He knew only that it bore no relationship whatever to what Dedwood had been saying. It read, simply, "Gosh-wow-oh-boy-oh-boy!" Puzzled, Jophan moved behind the artist, who had already com-

pleted several sketches. Jophan noted that they were all recognizable caricatures of Dedwood, but that for some reason the artist had in each case shown him as wearing a peculiarly shaped headgear which incorporated a small propeller."

Completely baffled by these quite extraordinary phenomena, Jophan withdrew and waited quietly until Dedwood had finished talking. Mr. Press and his assistant thanked Dedwood effusively, promised to give the Public a full and accurate report of all that he had told them, and said goodbye. Their shoulders were shaking as they walked off, but Dedwood did not seem to notice. Becoming once more conscious of Jophan's existence, he turned to him with pride. "There!" he said smugly. "I flatter myself that *this* time the Public will learn the truth about us."

He seemed so pleased with himself that Jophan did not have the heart to tell him what Mr. Press had actually written in his notebook. Instead, he merely thanked him for his courtesy and left the center of the city with a last glance of mingled contempt and pity for the preposterous erections.

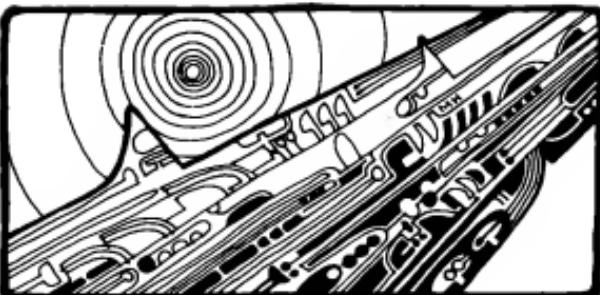
—*to be continued*—

#### NOTES:

1. Every neofan makes (or meets) his share of typos—typographical errors—and some find themselves unequal to the task of fanzine publishing as a result thereof. But Correction Fluid can be used on mimeograph stencils to erase typos, which can then be neatly typed over. All that is needed is reasonable care and attention.

(continued on page 113)

# the Future in Books



David R. Bunch: *MODERAN*, Avon # V2403, 1971; 240 pp., 75¢, paper.

*Quaint they were, these records, strange and ancient, washed to shore when the moderan seas finally unthawed. Played in the old-fashioned machine way we, the beam people, the Essenceland Dream people, easily divined, they told of a very different world, a transition world, if you will, between what we are now and the death and defeat these people hoped to overcome...*

—from the introduction to *Moderan*  
This book is strange and quaint indeed, as any reader who is familiar with Bunch's work should well know. *Moderan* is a collection of Bunch's famous stories about a strange, near future world which has been entirely enclosed by a sheet of sterile plastic and sprinkled over with tin flowers. The people have had the majority of their body parts "replaced" with metal, and there is a constant struggle to lower the number of "flesh strips" each person has in their body, hoping, ultimately, to have their entire body "replaced" with metal. They spend the majority of their time in Strongholds, battling back and

forth in constant war. "Totally involved in total war," says Bunch.

Like I said, it's a strange world. But while the world Bunch pictures may be strange, his distinguishing trademark is his style. Bunch writes in semi-humorous hysterical prose that screams at the reader for attention, a style that makes it hard to take even the grimdest and darkest future seriously. In this respect, he is very much like R. A. Lafferty, who makes his stories as farcical as possible, piling one absurdity upon another. He is also similar to Lafferty in that they both have a fondness for storytellers—i.e., a narrator that poses as the author of the story. In *Moderan*, it is the commander of Stronghold 10 (who has no other name).

One of Bunch's major problems in this book is that he lets this narration get out of control and drag on and on. The narrator will begin a long soliloquy, and all action will stop while he psychoanalyzes himself for two or three pages. Then he starts the story again—and in the next segment in the book, the same pattern of action-introspection-action is repeated. It becomes extremely boring. Bunch doesn't let the

story unfold before the reader, and let him catch meaning and implication of each event; he has his characters *tell* the reader, has them shout it out loud and clear:

*Let no one feel secure. Yet let every man go at that special speed which leaves no room for acceleration. What I mean, you'll be MAX at all times and all the way. When you wear out I'll replace you with no thought whatsoever concerning what you were. The GOAL of the overall effort is the ALL that counts. The little component parts mean nothing NOTHING . . . I HOPE I HAVE MADE MY POSITION PERFECTLY CLEAR.* (p. 58)

This method of story narration also has the unfortunate effect of making the reader feel that he is viewing all of the events in the book at a distance, rather than actually being there. This is not what a book should do; it should wrap the reader completely within its pages, so that for a time the reader "lives" along with the characters, suffers their problems, experiences their joys. *Moderan* does not do this.

Bunch's plots in most of these stories (if they exist at all) are naively simple. One story might consist entirely of a man talking to his troops. Or getting an operation. Or deciding what to do when "truce time" comes. And on the average, the stories are only six pages long—that doesn't give much room for development.

But perhaps I'm being a bit hard on Bunch. There are a few excellent stories in the book, such as "It Was Black Cat Weather" and "A Little Girl's Xmas in Moderan," which stand out above the rest; and I suspect that many more

would be memorable if they had been read in the magazines in which they originally appeared. Bunch's stories are more impressive if they are viewed individually; paradoxically, they gain no cumulative power when collected together in a book like this, unlike the short story series of other writers such as Fritz Leiber, Cordwainer Smith, etc. Instead, the stories gain only in repetitive dullness, as their similar qualities are brought out and intensified. In a magazine or anthology the odd style and hysterical tone is contrasted with the more ordinary types of sf stories, and their strangeness and difference is emphasized.

David R. Bunch's stories are often worth reading, but unless you're his devoted fan this particular book is not.

—Cy Chauvin

Kit Pedler and Gerry Davis: *MUTANT 59: The Plastic Eaters*, Viking Press, New York, 1972, Hardback, 246 pages, \$5.95.

The two authors of this book are relatively unknown in this country, but in England they are both prominent and respected individuals. Mr. Davis is a writer for British television and the prestigious Canadian National Film Board. Kit Pedler is a Ph.D. at the University of London in experimental biology. Together they have joined forces to collaborate on a very plausible novel with some plausible assumptions that make things happen.

As I read the book, I couldn't help but recall the world-menace type novels of John Wyndham (*Out of The Deeps*, *The Day of the Triffids*, *The Midwich*

*Cuckoos*). Like Wyndham's novels, *Mutant 59* is set in present-day London; and there is much mention of indigenous streets and landmarks. There is also a sub-plot romance between the protagonist and a beautiful young girl. Unlike Wyndham, however, Davis and Pedler do not emphasize their characters, but instead shuffle them off into corners and let the science take charge. The characters are pawns on a chessboard, being moved about whimsically by the autonomous actions of the "plastic eaters."

After a chapter of bizarre, and seemingly unrelated, accidents, the reader is introduced to the central character, Luke Gerrard. He is a member of a scientific consulting agency that is actually a think-tank of genius inventors. The agency is responsible for the invention and mass production of a bio-degradable plastic called "Degron" and superinsulating plastic known as "Aminostyrene." Eventually it becomes clear to the reader that these two substances are in some way connected with the series of catastrophes that have recently occurred. An Apollo capsule disintegrates in the atmosphere when a switch fails, a nuclear sub is lost at sea, a traffic-control computer goes bananas, an airliner crashes, etc. The list is long and suitably tragic.

Approximately halfway through the novel, the reader learns the cause of the disintegrating plastic substances and the ensuing disasters. An obscure scientist has bred mutant strains of bacteria in an attempt to develop an ecological weapon that will aid in the disposal of plastic waste. As he is sloshing

the 59th mutation culture about in a flask, he suffers a somewhat contrived cerebral hemorrhage and dies. The flask crashes into his sink, releasing a culture of plastic-eating bacteria into London's sewer system. The bacteria begin to feed and grow on the tons of bio-degradable containers made of Degron that are daily being dumped into the sewers.

That leads me to the major complaint I have with the novel; and that is the inane sub-title: *The Plastic Eaters*. If the reader does not know before he even starts that the novel is about something that eats plastic, the tension and mystery would be sustained for over half the book. If the title was simply: *Mutant 59*, the reader would be treated to a much more meaty puzzle to play with.

Eventually the mutant bacteria grows and swells in the sewer system until it seeps into London's underground rail and electrical systems, causing the entire transportation network to collapse. A byproduct of the ingestion of plastic is a highly inflammable gas, which causes great explosions to rock the center of London. Multiplying at a geometric rate, chaos and eventual world destruction seem inevitable. But the hero, Gerrard, escapes from a subway disaster with a sample of the bacteria, and the consulting agency pieces all the clues together. They begin an attempt to stop the spread of the plastic eaters, and the race is on until the end of novel.

*Mutant 59* is a good blend of hard science and highly descriptive action sequences. Dr. Pedler knows his science well, and the explanations of the bio-

logical sequences is competent and sure-handed. The theme of the book reminded me of *The Andromeda Strain*, although handled in a different manner. The novel is paced fairly well, although it seemed to drag through some of the sub-plots. There were also instances of overwriting with a good many adjectives and adverbs crammed into each paragraph.

But *Mutant 59: The Plastic Eaters* pins down an intriguing and very plausible concept—a mindless, indifferent life-form, simply surviving, but in the process, devouring our technology and civilization. With the development of new, bio-degradable substances, the evolution of such a mutant strain of bacteria becomes a chilling possibility. It is interesting to note the increase in the number of novels and stories in SF that are now dealing with the biological advancements that have been snowballing on us within the last decade. The day is growing closer when the distinctions between the biological and the mechanical grow less and less acute. This book makes the reader realize how much our civilization has grown to depend upon mechanical and synthetic contrivances for biological stability. A good, action-filled, hard-science novel that is available through the SF Book Club—it's a good buy.

—Thomas F. Monteleone

Thomas D. Clareson (ed.): SF *The Other Side of Realism*, Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1971. \$8.95 hardbound, \$3.50 paper. 256 pp.

The academia is invading science fiction, they tell us, and it will never be the

same again. This thick collection of twenty-six essays is bound to add fuel to that cry, but I wonder; glancing down the contents page, I see that approximately half of the articles either originally appeared in fanzines, and/or are written by sf fans or professionals. Who is invading whom? I suspect that this "invasion" will end in the same manner as the New Wave, with the field gobbling up and absorbing those academics who truly help to advance it, while the rest are ostracized or ignored. In the meantime, this volume should provide plenty of material for the dedicated reader and fan to mull over.

One of the most notable items in the book is Samuel R. Delany's essay on style vs. content, "About Five Thousand One Hundred Seventy Five Words." It's a masterful essay, but basically an exercise in hair-splitting (as are quite a number of the other essays in the book). Delany argues that "put into opposition to 'style' there is no such thing as 'content.'" Or, in other words, you cannot separate *what* you say ("content") from *how* you say it ("style"). If confronted with two phrases like "the scarlet sea rose in huge glassy swells to meet the asure sky" and "the red sea washed upwards toward the blue sky" Delany would argue that they each mean a different thing; that the phrases differ not only in style but content as well. And this is true—there is a slight difference in the meaning of each phrase. But it is far overshadowed by the difference in style. From a practical standpoint, it is sometimes useful to say "the style in this story is flawless, but its meaning is

trivial." From Delany's viewpoint, this would be a meaningless criticism. But the essay is interesting for the insight it gives into Delany's mind, and the extreme care with which he treats words and their multitudinous meanings (as should be obvious from his fiction). Perhaps, too, Delany is not quite as radical in his abolition of "content" as I've mentioned here, but only wishes to remind us of the close relationship between style and subject matter, and the way in which they both merge and blend together. In this he succeeds admirably.

Judith Merril also contributes a notable essay, "What Do You Mean: Science? Fiction?" She touches on many things that occurred in the development of sf, such as Anthony Boucher's role as editor of *F&SF*, the parallels with what she calls the "Beat" movement, and her hope for the rise of a "new literature" which would not be sf but would use "sf techniques" (whatever they are). Again, this essay is probably more interesting for the insight it gives into the author's mind and the historical background it presents than for any argument that Merril advances about the future of sf, and how it should evolve. Its rambling, jumping-from-one-subject-to-another nature will give some readers a headache, or leave them confused, when in fact, it is Merril herself who is confused. And she admits it. She doesn't know where the field is going, or how it will evolve: "fifteen years from now, someone will have to point out my omissions and errors." She can only point her finger in a vague direction, and whether sf will (or should)

go in that direction is up to you to accept or reject.

But this book isn't just a collection of essays debating sf theory and criticism; there's a number of interesting historical articles in it, too. One of the best is Bernard Bergonzi's "The Publication of *The Time Machine*, 1894-1895." Bergonzi mentions that *The Time Machine* is generally considered to be H. G. Wells's best novel, and then he goes on to examine all the different changes and revisions the novel went through, from serial publication in a magazine called the *News Review* to the different American and British book editions. He reveals that Wells was asked by a temperamental editor to expand the serial version of his novel, so that the last installment would not appear so skimpy. (But this expansion later resulted in several additions to the 'final' version of the novel, which improved it.) He also mentions how Wells' attitude changed as he wrote more and more novels, from that of an artist intent upon producing a finished work as possible, to that of a journalist. Those interested in this sort of thing will find the essay fascinating.

Another interesting historical article, of a different slant, is "Kurt Lasswitz: A German Pioneer of Science Fiction," by Franz Rottensteiner. Lasswitz wrote a number of sf short stories and novels around the turn of the century, the most notable being *Two Planets*, first published in 1897 (it was only recently translated in English and published by the Southern University Press). The novel is about an invasion of the earth by Martians, who look upon the earthmen as beasts and uncivil-

(continued on page 127)

(continued from page 41)

open to him. She begged him to hurry (oh please) and had not fed for days (oh now). And she was dying. (Hurry or I will die.)

Bevans came forward, and up, and without hesitation or thought, and he entered her. But something was wrong. He touched her soul and sensed it. She was not warm as once she'd been hot and she was not good as once she'd been divine. She was nothing. An old old weak cold evil woman and barely alive.

For the first time in weeks, Bevans had a thought:

*I can kill her.*

She heard him. She tried to expel him, realizing now the futility of all this. (And Bevans could feel her feeling this way). Bevans had nothing to give, nothing but his one thought, an accident that, but a thought and a thought which would be enough to kill.

It was too late.

There was nothing she could do. Ten thousand years old and weak, even for Bevans and his one meager thought, and now he laughed like an angel.

And fed.

He found that part of her which lived, unfaded, and found it old. He found it and he fed. It was rotting, already dying, but he took it inside him, taking and not giving, and she screamed (inside) and slashed and pleaded and moaned and begged. She howled (inside).

Bevans fed. He was making her clean and shiny.

He rose, came out, saw the world, and stood above her.

She was dead.

Marlen was dead. Her body lay

opened in a thousand places, arms and legs and neck and thighs and belly, everywhere, all old, open and bleeding, and the water was blood and it dripped to the floor, lying in neat palid pools of warm scarlet.

Bevans turned away.

He had killed her and now he was fully alone.

There was a ladder leaning against one wall of the room. Bevans climbed the ladder, not looking behind or below, pushed open a trapdoor, and found himself on the roof.

The street was far below him, empty and quiet. Bevans went to the edge of the roof and peered down. There was another ladder, a short one, and below it, the beginning of a fire escape which led all the way to the ground.

He decided to make a run for it. He moved easily down the ladder and then stood poised at the summit of the fire escape.

Below him lay forty-nine floors and between him and the ground lay forty-nine flights of twisting turning steps.

With a giggle, he took off.

His feet were not his own, and look at him go, dashing down those stairs, nearly stumbling a thousand times, but always recovering, always continuing, sweeping around corners, trying to move faster, quicker, faster, grabbing at handholds. Down and down and down. The wind combing his hair as he moved, rearranging it into a hundred different styles. A soldier spotted him from a window and yipped, yelled, fired a shot, and Bevans roaring past him, like a bullet freed from the gun, moving, but still Bevans, and down and down, floors zipping past him, turning,

dashing, down again, turning, down again.

Down.

He reached the ground and fell in a heap of laughing bubbling happiness. He lay there laughing with the joy of his freedom, the freedom of his joy.

Marlen was dead, yes, but he was alive. *Whee.*

Finally he got to his feet and stumbled away from the Tower. He did not look back. He thought of turning, looking, but decided no. Marlen was dead and the Tower must perish with her. He would never look upon it again.

He walked the streets and reached out, touching those whose lives he passed. He passed the young and the old, men and women, animals, children, and all of them were within him and meshed, one, living there.

The sun was setting, lovely lonely towering sun, like a red torch against the horizon. Bevans walked the empty streets. There were people here—those that lived inside him—but he felt he needed something more than that. He wanted people he could see and touch and smell and feel. People who were people, with form and substance and reality.

A death wagon rolled around a corner and stopped. Bevans walked over to where it was parked.

The driver was a young man, about twenty, with bushy blond hair. He smiled at Bevans.

"Shouldn't be out, friend. Unless you're ill. You're not, are you?"

"I'm dying," Bevans said, "but not from the plague. Can you tell me where to find the people?"

"Inside. Everyone's afraid of the

plague and hiding. Can't blame them."

"But you lift the dead in your bare hands. I know—I've seen you."

"I'm safe. I've already had it."

"That's good but—I really want to see some people. Any people. Isn't there anywhere in the city...? Soldiers, even."

"The Sunrise Community. There's always people there, you know. Even the plague can't keep them indoors."

"I'll go there," Bevans said. He waved at the driver and turned away. "Thank you."

Bevans hurried down empty streets. From each man we may learn a little of something, and from this man Bevans had learned the certainty of his fate, the inevitability of his own death. Not that he couldn't change his fate if he wished, but to survive he would have to feed, and by feeding, he would doom another human being to misery and death. No. It was better for him to die. He was prepared for it. To see people, touch them, to hear and learn and feel. And then, to die.

The Sunrise Community danced with light. The sun had set but street corner beacons flared with misty colors of their own. As he came near, Bevans heard voices. Not talk, but crying and laughing, howling joy and howling terror.

He hurried.

And then he was there, among them, pushing his way into the crowd, a crowd which filled the street from curb to curb, and some let him pass, tipping their hats, and others said no, refused to budge an inch, but from them all, Bevans learned a little something. He heard and saw and touched and smelled

and felt and learned.

He reached a wall. There was breathing space here and he leaned against the bricks. Slowly he slipped toward the ground until he sat on the cold earth, content, exhausted, spent, and waiting.

The people churned around him. The plague was here, but who feared the plague? The war had been lost, but who feared the war? The plague, the war, they were only death and it was not death that concerned these people. Bevans was dying. That part of his life was finished. It was life that he sought. The touch of a feeling and the feeling of a touch. The life in a life. Only that.

Bevans was dying. But as he was dying, he was born again. He let himself lie open and they came to him: the beggars and thieves, the whores and liars. Men without legs and arms. Women with everything that could be had. All of this and all of them. They came to this man who was open and—and they were no longer there. They were a river, a tide, a swarm, a thing that swept toward the sea. A river is a body composed of single drops of water (and water in turn is a molecule composed of two separate atoms), but it is impossible for a man watching a river to see each drop as an individual identity. The current is quick; the drops are infinite. It is a river and the river is a thing that sweeps toward the sea.

He was part of this river now, one small drop among them all, swept along with the tide, going from sunset to sunrise, from source to sea, drawn by the current, pulled here, pulled there, moving.

He was a drowning man. He was

dying, but he did not care, for a drowning man who wants to drown is at peace and harmony with the water around him. Bevans did not struggle and he was serene.

Alston.

He glimpsed one drop out of the many, one drop alone like an island. Bevans reached for that drop, out of the river, but it did not matter, for within that one drop was the whole river and not just the river but the sea and the ocean and all the oceans and all the seas.

Alston crept through the street, his head bowed, and he was the river.

Bevans knew he must find this man.

He began to move. The people were people again and they parted to allow him to pass.

He was crawling, dying.

He reached out and he touched Alston on the leg.

Alston looked at him.

"I did it," he said. "I did it."

Alston looked down at him.

People began to scream. For some reason. Making it hard to understand.

Alston reached down and said, "Bevans."

Bevans squirmed away.

"Bevans—what—?"

"I love you," Bevans said and the river was near.

"What?" Alston cupped his ear. The crowd was loud.

"I love you," Bevans said, in the river again, and gone. He was bevans but Bevans was gone. It was gone.

"What?"

And this time bevans shouted it: "i love you!"

And knew he'd been heard, and the

river, waiting, reached and grabbed and carried him down, the current sweeping bevans, moving, tipping, toppling bevans, around and around. The sea

beckoned endlessly.

*i said that i loved you, said bevans*

—GORDON EKLUND

## CLUB HOUSE (continued from page 104)

2. I confess that it was not until I tried several phonetic pronunciations that I realized that "Kerles" is a pun on "Careless;" perhaps the authors had in mind one well-known fan of the last two decades whose spelling was always uniquely individual, and whose early reputation was built upon this fact.

3. Perfexion's "guides" are lettering guides, and the other paraphenalia are also for use in doing artistically elaborate things with mimeograph stencils. A few are needed by anyone who wants to publish a mimeographed fanzine, but Perfexion seems obsessed with them to the extent that his concentration has wavered from the actual goal in fanzine publishing. He will publish technically perfect fanzines, but only infrequently and their content may not be up to their appearance. The "'scope" is a mimeoscope, a lightbox on which stencils can be more easily proofread for typographical errors. Perfexion is Kerles' diametric opposite, but both seem doomed not to achieve Trufandom.

4. An entire subfandom exists for collectors, and most fans, voracious readers by nature, do maintain collections of some sort, but the danger lies in allowing the Collecting Bug to become an obsession, since it will not only drain the pocketbook but all too soon overflow all available space. (In the more than fifteen years since *The Enchanted Duplicator* was written, prices on early sf magazines have skyrocketed, making the Collecting Bug all the more

hazardous...) Nonetheless, as a trip to any sf convention will prove, the Hucksters still flourish.

5. The Serious Constructive Fans have always tried to put a pompous face on sf and fandom, and all too often have taken pratfalls. The National Fantasy Fan Federation is one example: a nationwide amalgamation of fanclubs was proposed in the early forties (by no less prominent a fan at that time than Damon Knight), but it has been for most of its history a jury-rigged fannish deadend which has often been regarded within fandom as a laughing stock. Nevertheless, it still survives. In 1939 *Time* magazine covered the first World SF Convention in New York and ridiculed fandom within its pages, attributing to fans an attitude which *Time* summed up as "Gosh-wow-oh-boy-oh-boy!" Fans polished their Shields of Umor, and "Gosh-wow" has been used as a term of self-ridicule ever since. In more recent times it has been applied to overenthusiastic neofans.

6. In the late forties Ray Nelson invented the propeller-beanie as a fannish headgear, incorporating it into his fannish cartoons to identify the fans from the non-fans. Ray intended it as a gentle spoof on the more juvenile antics of the fans he knew, and it has remained a part of the traditions of fandom ever since.

—BOB SHAW & WALT WILLIS

*This is the ad the Racing Form refused to print!*

# Winning at the Races May Not

Here I sit, trying to write about Larry Voegele. And all the while I'm working and sweating, the guy I'm writing about is out at the racetrack. Not a worry in the world—and probably making more money in a day than I make in a week.

What's his secret? *He knows how to beat the races.* Really knows. Knows so much that he runs a school for handicappers. (It's the only one of its kind in the world. Which is why he was asked to appear on "What's My Line.")

He charges his "students" two hundred bucks apiece. He tells them that if they're not completely satisfied he'll return every cent they've paid, and *nobody* has ever asked for his money back.

What's more, he went on a live radio show and did something that had never been done before. The interviewer really threw it to him: asked him to pick the winners in the 7 races that were being run at Santa Anita, while the program was on the air. Two out of seven would have been good enough to show a profit. Three would have been phenomenal. Larry Voegele picked *five!*

If he'd been at the track betting, say \$20 on each race, he would have picked up a cool \$404...net profit! Not bad for an afternoon's "work." And all the knowledge that Larry publicly *proved* that day...*every* fact that he teaches in his \$200 course...is in his book.

If you've never bet on a horse in your life, you'll read and enjoy every word. And end up understanding more than most guys who have been

following the ponies all their lives.

If you're an oldtimer, you'll skip the background and get right down to the nitty gritty. If you can forget what you *think* you know, if you have the nerve—and the *discipline*—to follow his methods to the *letter*, you could make more money than you ever dreamed possible.

Why? Because you'll *know* more than 95% of the people who go to the track—and you're betting against *them!* The money they lose, *you'll* win! The track and the state take their cut, but there's plenty to go around.

At Santa Anita, for example, over *two million dollars* is bet every day. And it's a statistical fact that only one out of 20 walks out a big winner. You can be one of them!

Larry Voegele doesn't look like a racetrack tout. He's not. He's a college graduate. He was the editor of a newspaper. He was a legislative assistant to a congressman.

He was a stockbroker, working for a major Wall Street firm. *Was* because he found out that investing in horse races was *safer*—and more profitable—than trying to beat the Bulls and the Bears at their own game.

And that's the secret of his book. He approaches handicapping as a *professional*. It's *scientific*. No "hunches." No "tips." No so-called "systems." It isn't even "inside information." Just simple, hard *facts*. Facts that *anyone* could see if they knew what to look for. In short, if they knew what Larry Voegele knows—and tells in his book.

# It Be Your Idea of Fun, But . . .

It'll take you about an hour to read it. Another hour to practice what he preaches.

Then if you do *exactly* as he says, step by step . . . if you don't get reckless or greedy . . . you'll be on your way to the kind of life you want.

Is that worth a 2-hour investment? Because that's all you're risking. Just time. Not money.

Here's why: your check or money order will *not* be deposited for two weeks *after* your copy of the book is mailed. That'll give you plenty of time to receive your book, read it thoroughly, and put the principles into *action*.

If you're not thrilled with what you have gained, just send the book back within 14 days. Your *uncashed* check or money order will be in the return mail! Ever heard of an offer like that? No. But there's never been a

book like this either.

As to the price—if you decide to keep the book. Frankly, we didn't know what to charge. It isn't just paper and ink. It's *information*. Facts that dozens of people have paid \$200 to gain—and were satisfied to pay!

But there aren't many people who can afford that kind of money. Even for a sure thing. So what do you think about 10 dollars? That's all—10 dollars. And you have something *better* than a money back guarantee. Because your check or money order won't even be cashed unless—and until—you decide to keep the book because it's worth a *lot more*. Winning at the horse races, traveling first class and living in the best hotels may not be your idea of fun. As for me, I think it sure beats working for a living. See you at the track.

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OK—I'll take you up on your offer. Send me Larry Voegeli's book. Enclosed is my check or money order for ten dollars, but DO NOT DEPOSIT IT FOR 14 DAYS AFTER YOU SEND MY ORDER.

If I return the book within that time, you'll return my payment, uncashed, by return mail.

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3. "The Autumn Land," by Clifford D. Simak

**Best Dramatic Presentation:**

1. *A Clockwork Orange*
2. *The Andromeda Strain*
3. *THX 1138*

**Best Professional Artist:**

1. Frank Kelly Freas
2. Jeff Jones
3. John Schoenherr

**Best Professional Magazine:**

1. *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*
2. *Analog*
3. *AMAZING S.F.*

**Best Amateur Magazine (fanzine):**

1. *Locus*
2. *Energumen*
3. *Granfalloon*

**Best Fan Writer:**

1. Harry Warner, Jr.
2. Terry Carr
3. Susan Glicksohn

**Best Fan Artist:**

1. Tim Kirk
2. William Rotsler
3. Alicia Austin

You'll note that the win-place-show in the category of professional magazine is a virtual repeat of last year's; at the time of writing I don't know whether *FANTASTIC* placed fourth or fifth (out of the five contenders). This situation will apparently not continue next year. The business session of the LACON pushed through a change in the Hugo rules (strongly sponsored by Harlan Ellison) which will remove the category of Best Professional Magazine and replace it with Best Professional *Editor*, or somesuch. That means that you will no longer have the opportunity to nominate or vote for this magazine—or, indeed, any magazine—and that the category as a whole is now expanded to include not only the four editors of the professional sf magazines, but those who regularly edit anthologies within the field. This change is a highly significant one to those of us still involved with the magazines. For more than a year now an-

thologies like *Orbit* have been legally eligible for contention in the Best Professional Magazine category, but the swing of emphasis is now being shifted to include those editors whose work is not necessarily with *series* anthologies, but simply with anthologies of any kind. If volume has any effect upon future voting, I wouldn't be surprised to see Roger Elwood (who told me recently he had well over two dozen contracts for anthologies of new stories) take the Hugo in coming years.

It's the first time in a great many years that the sf magazines, for so long the backbone of our field, won't be honored specifically with a Hugo. And while it's true that the editor makes the magazine, and that just possibly the combined votes which I received for *FANTASTIC* and *AMAZING* might have won me a Hugo for editing them, had the votes been so counted this year, I am unhappy about this change in the awards. The significance is, I think, symbolic: a sign that for some people at least, the day of the sf magazine is over.

I hope this turns out to be untrue—and the best way for that point to be made, will be the winner of this new category to be the editor of a science fiction magazine. Stay tuned, folks: next year around this time we'll know what happens.

SOME OF THE OTHER awards were also significant. One convention attendee was overheard to remark, "All the best contenders came in second." Well, we won't debate the merit of that remark, but *The Lathe of Heaven*, which we serialized here almost two years ago, did place second once again (it placed a very close second in Nebula voting). And Jeff Jones, whose magazine work has been confined in recent years to *AMAZING* and *FANTASTIC*, also placed second. Hmm....

In the artshow, Don Davis, whose covers graced our last two issues, picked up three prizes, one of them (First Prize, Astronomical) for our September cover painting. We're very pleased for Don, who

will be doing additional covers for us on a regular basis (as well as for *F & SF*). I am less than pleased to report that a number of strangely jealous and vindictive individuals were moved to falsely accuse Don of plagiarism, thus throwing the cloud of controversy over his fully justified success in the show. That show organizers gave credence to these foolish charges without demanding any documentation, and lent their own voice to such charges was disheartening. A young man of Don's enormous talent should not be subjected to such a petty-minded reception by fandom's artistic amateurs.

THOSE OF YOU who have followed my series of editorials on the subject of the Worldcons will be pleased to hear that the hosts for the 1974 Worldcon (who were selected by unanimous vote at the LACon, after the other contender withdrew) will be the Washington, D.C., group, chaired by Jay and Alice Haldeman. (Jay, in his other persona, Jack C. Haldeman II, has had stories in both *AMAZING* and *FANTASTIC*, and will have more upcoming.) The Haldemans have pledged their convention to turn back the tide of high membership fees and related con-going costs. Memberships are now available for \$5.00 (attending) or \$3.00 (supporting), and include the right to nominate and vote for the 1974 Hugo Awards, two years hence. (The address is P.O. Box 31127, Washington, D.C., 20031.)

For next year's Worldcon membership (and attendant Hugo voting rights), send the same sum to the Torcon, P.O. Box 4, Station K, Toronto 12, Ontario, Canada. (After December first, the fees go up to \$7.00 and \$4.00 respectively.)

There's been a great deal of talk about the future direction of the Worldcon—much of it sparked by my editorials here—at recent conventions, including the LACon. To get an idea of the size of convention we are now talking about, on Sunday night when the registration desk was closed, with only the tail-end of the convention to follow, the

membership was up to 2,521, with an actual registered attendance of 1,956. Without a doubt, over two thousand were really in attendance.

I heard relatively few complaints about the convention and how it was run (and these amounted largely to the sort of complaints you'll always hear from a few soreheads) and have none myself. But the sheer size of the convention was in several unusual ways an annoyance. Probably the most paradoxical complaint I can make is that too many people whose company I enjoy were there. This seems to have been true for many attendees: while in smaller conventions the cliques and ingroups settle down relatively soon into a series of enjoyable parties and conversations, on this occasion too many people seemed to find themselves doomed to wandering from party to party, searching out particular friends or acquaintances of whom they had hoped to see more. The cliques and ingroups were too large! What at earlier conventions might boil down to a group of one or two dozen people who could all find each other relatively easily, mushroomed at the LACon into groups comprising fifty to a hundred people, scattered over a dozen floors and many more parties. Bear in mind that I am not speaking of just one ingroup of fans or pros, but of dozens of such groups, each of which probably overlapped several of the others. This is a recognized sociological phenomenon—the seeking out of a comfortably-sized ingroup at larger gatherings—but its accomplishment seemed quite often more frustrating than successful.

Well, no wonder: two thousand people were there. I would suppose that of that two thousand I personally wanted to meet and talk with at least two hundred. That I managed to do that with perhaps twenty is not at all surprising, under such circumstances, but still frustrating; I spoke with dozens while riding up (or down) in an elevator or while making my way across one of the crowded convention rooms toward a specific objective on its other side, and the

conversation was always fragmentary and ended with "See you later!" But I usually didn't see that person later.

On the other hand, I did have an opportunity to meet and talk at least briefly with a number of you and it's a shame that I didn't have at least an advance copy of a forthcoming issue to show you at such times.

THE CONVENTION was full of chance encounters, ranging from the sudden reappearance of an old friend whom I'd not seen in ten years (and whose place of residence then had been three thousand miles to the east) to the discovery that the man who registered for the convention directly after me was Ross Rocklynne. We were following a sort of line from the person behind the table who gave us the forms to fill out to another person with a typewriter who made up our badges, and it was somewhere around the last part of this procedure that the rather quiet man behind me leaned forward to ask, almost hesitantly, "Um, pardon me, but I see you're from Virginia...are you *the* Ted White? I'm Ross Rocklynne."

I think that for a few moments I must have presented the picture of the flustered neofan at his first convention: about all I could do was to say something incoherent and to shake his hand. I'd never met Ross before, and only corresponded with him in a brief, professional capacity. It was enormously flattering to be asked by him if I was "*the* Ted White"—and, Ross, I'm sorry we didn't have a better chance to sit and chat, after such a flabbergastingly casual meeting as that. But that, as I say, was the major frustration of the convention. (When, in more mundane circles I am asked if I am "*the* Ted White," I am forced to shake my head no and admit that I had no hand in *The Making of the President...*)

THE WEEKEND BEFORE LACON we spent in rainy Albuquerque as the Guest of Honor of the Bubonicon. I had to fight off a bout of summer flu before we could leave home—thus losing two days of scheduled

travel—and the drive out was hectic. We arrived around midnight on Friday night and were greeted with a heartwarming burst of applause on our entrance to the convention's party room. It developed that we'd been given up for lost when we hadn't arrived (as planned) a day earlier.

The Bubonicon was in most ways a direct antithesis to the LACON. Small (perhaps fifty members), friendly, unstructured (except for a luncheon banquet), and relaxed, it was the sort of convention in which anyone who doesn't know everyone else at the start does by the time it's over. It was good to see old Albuquerque-area fans like Roy Tackett, Bob Vardeman and Jack Speer again, and a pleasure to make the acquaintance of newer fans like Dick Patten who helped us out at a difficult moment (our daughter's elbow had become dislocated) and took us out to his home to meet his wife and children (who were just the antidote to the hospital that Kitten needed). Thanks again, Dick.

Fan Guest of Honor Mike Glicksohn gave a talk at the luncheon banquet about his difficulties in attending a convention so far from his native Toronto (the air fare is ridiculous), and said that he'd given up on making it until I told the world in an editorial here a few issues back that he would be the Fan Guest of Honor at the Bubonicon. That, he said, was too much to resist: he had to come, at no matter what cost. I think the convention's attendees all agreed that, for whatever reason he might give, they were glad to have him there.

The weather cleared up on the day after the convention, but strange and atypical weather seemed to plague us on our drive across country. We saw the Grand Canyon all but obscured in the rain-mist, and dodged multiple electrical storms in the desert. But a drive across this vast country of ours is always a refreshment to my sense of wonder, and even poor weather couldn't dim my pleasure in the magnificent range of scenery.

We took in the Painted Desert and Petrified Forest, the Boulder Dam (the

powerhouses of which resemble nothing more than an old Frank R. Paul painting—in such ways does life imitate art), deserts, mountains, and the man-made wonders of Las Vegas. We have yet to drive north, up along the Pacific Coast through the land of redwoods to Crater Lake. We have yet to cross the Idaho lava plains and visit again the Craters of the Moon National Park, or Yellowstone, or any of the other

treats in store on our drive back, but the pleasure of the anticipation is there, and all too soon—in another day or so, after a day on the beach to restore convention-shattered nerves we'll be on the road again. And by the time you read this, we'll be home once more, with only memories and momentos to remind us of all we've seen and done.

—TED WHITE

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## CLOSE YOUR EYES (continued from page 77)

In a world without Time a once-human, a man whose one talent was destruction, may be a God.

Since Forever, the God stares at his memories.

In his sightless gaze a rainbow of worlds stretch away to infinity, but he centres his interest slightly on the world of a certain David Powers, the one being whose intellect had brushed his, out here. If he had wished to register emotion, he might have laughed the first laugh of his existence, for, from this position he could *see*.

To him, those he had left, or was leaving, or would leave (what tense is to be used where time has no meaning?) were but ants marching in a gutter. To the ants, the gutter is in their present, the open drain just ahead will be their future. To the man standing on the roadway, looking down, both gutter and drain are in the present.

Herck is on the roadway that leads beyond Time. He had started on the same journey towards Death as any man, but with timelessness Man's nature is changed, supernatured. This is new Herck. He can *see* why NATSI can not journey to the Future. There is no *Barrier* to be overcome. They have not been quarantined.

They have no Future.

Around the corner, their drain is just ahead. The honour of the final great mistake will go to David Powers, Scientist Chrononaut. His Transitemp, the last *timebomb*, will remove any future their world might ever have had.

Powers, apparently safe in the No Time he has reached, realises his error—and cares nothing. But Powers will not survive in No Time. He will be destroyed by one who is stronger.

There is but one God.

—A. G. MORAN

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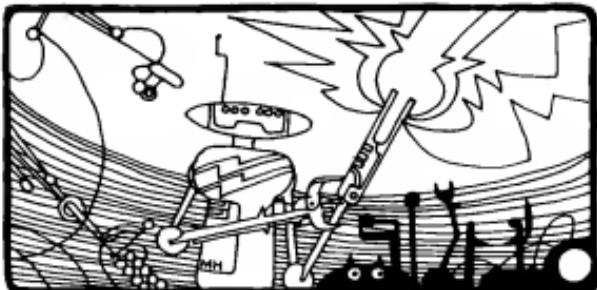
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# ...OR SO YOU SAY



*Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced on one side of each sheet of paper, and addressed to Or So You Say, P.O. Box 409, Falls Church, Va., 22046.*

Dear Ted,

Your editorial in the May AMAZING concerning Mr. Prescott was quite interesting, since a very similar situation occurred to myself a few years ago. Peter Prescott has been condemning sf as illiterate juvenile trash for years, it seems. At least he was doing so in 1969 when he reviewed Crichton's *The Andromeda Strain*; he found the book to be quite good, more than likely because it was *not* written by an "sf author." I had nothing against the book—as a matter of fact I hadn't read it at the time—but I did take issue with him for using that review as a platform from which to attack all "real" sf. He noted that he had a consuming passion for science fiction at the age of eleven, but had since rejected it as worthless. He was then self-justified in commenting upon the state of the art some twenty or thirty years later; of course he found it wanting, in much the same fashion as you have described in your editorial.

Needless to say, that review (which appeared in the June 10, 1969 issue of

Look) put me off somewhat. I typed an Angry Reply to the magazine's editors, and seethed for quite a while. Doubtless my calling the review "an incompetent, ignorant, and preposterous piece of trash" placed me in the category of psychopathic crank, for some weeks later I received a letter from an Assistant Editor in Charge of Crank Letters (or something) that contained the following condescending paragraph:

"The editors were sorry to learn that you found Mr. Prescott's review of *The Andromeda Strain* so inept. However, as Mr. Prescott pointed out, with science advancing at such a great pace it is very difficult to come up with original ideas."

The same old shtick! Science has caught up with science fiction! This seems to be the best ploy "mainstream" critics such as Prescott can utilize against sf, and to them it's enough to ignore its existence (almost) completely. I don't know how he gets off with his sadistic judgments, but he obviously does or he would have given sf up long ago.

Sf has been receiving a large amount of intelligent, honest appraisal lately, but there are still those like Prescott

who fail to look beyond their own egos and appreciate what is being done in the field. I'm not sure how we can handle them—their audience and influence is much greater than most of ours. Hopefully people will be able to make up their own minds about the quality of today's sf, because they are literally being bombarded by it everywhere. We can hope that Prescott will either come around (that's highly unlikely) or will shut up. Letter writing can help, I think. We can drown the bastard under a sea of mail.

MARK MUMPER  
1227 Laurel Street  
Santa Cruz CA 95060

*I concur with your conclusion. But I think it's wise to make sure those letters are intelligently written and do not fly off the emotional handle—otherwise they only bolster his already negative opinion of sf and its readership.—tw*

Dear Ted:

It was fascinating to learn from the latest issue of *AMAZING STORIES* that at least one reader in search of the current issue finally located it concealed behind *Sexology* magazine. I'll keep that in mind the next time I go searching for copies of either one on the stands—who knows, next time *Sexology* may be hidden behind *AMAZING STORIES*. We have our difficulties with distribution and display, too. Far too many stands carry neither title.

Your September cover is most attractive; and an oldtimer like myself was delighted to see such clean, clear reproduction of Wesso's artwork for Campbell's "Islands of Space" in the special portfolio section. Cannot comment on the fiction as yet. However, it's the departments that make the magazine for me—I read them as soon as possible.

From the days of Charles D. Hornig in *Wonder Stories* (late 1933 to early 1936), I've been a sucker for the personal magazine or the magazine that presents a distinct personality. That was why I looked forward to the next issue of *Wonder* more eagerly than to *Astounding Stories* in those days—*AS* did have much better stories on the whole, but Tremaine insisted upon being the unobtrusive type of editor. Well, some people prefer that (I could never convince Jim Blish, back in the 40's, that "Brass Tacks" would have been better had the editor commented upon letters). Since then dozens of science fiction magazines have come and gone, including my own (which were personal when the publisher allowed it), but the ones I remember had that approach. Malcolm Reiss' and Wilbur S. Peacock's *Planet Stories*; Sam Merwin's and Sam Mines' *Thrilling Wonder* and *Startling Stories* come to mind.

And you are the sole survivor of that school. Like all of us who have edited science fiction magazines, you dream of printing the first run of some story that will be remembered and talked about—oh, say as long as *The Skylark of Space*. But whether I find the stories comparable (relatively) to old Doc Smith in effectiveness, or find them unreadable—or somewhere in between—it's the personal touch of the editor that keeps me looking for each issue. Memorable fiction is a bonus, after I've read the editorial and your comments on the letters. May you continue indefinitely.

ROBERT A. W. LOWNDES  
Hoboken, New Jersey, 07030

*"Doc" Lowndes is too modest—his own career as an editor in our field dates back more than thirty years to Future Fiction, Science Fiction Stories and SF Quarterly; in more recent years he edited The Magazine of Horror, Startling Mystery and Famous Science Fiction, and he is at present the Associate Editor of the late Hugo Gernsback's Sexology. His reputation throughout his career has been that of coping somehow*

*with overwhelming odds—usually in the form of penny-pinching publishers and rock-bottom budgets—to publish a series of memorable magazines. I'm enormously flattered by your letter, Doc, and I hope some day you'll have another chance within our field.*—TW

Dear Editor White,

When I saw the February and March issues of your mags with the "All New Stories" blurb on it, I was in sheer ecstasy. This under normal circumstances would merit respect and thanks from me. Not necessarily with the written word, for, I do not write letters with a respectable regularity but, at least inwardly. I am not thanking you and/or Mr. Cohen for what you have done. You see, I have a lot of difficulty thanking someone who has been deceiving me for over a time period of a half year.

Recently in your May issue you explained that you are now with this new policy both AMAZING and FANTASTIC would go from a nine point type to a ten point type. Little did I know that this would mean that I would be getting 10% less fiction with this larger type. I was under the impression that the decrease in wordage would be very small as you said in I believe your April editorial. Mr. White 10% is not a small figure as you have previously stated.

This half-truth that you said, should have been more explicitly worded. It was deceiving to me (and others, I assume) but not unforgivable. The following, I will have a much harder time forgiving you; the readers of AMAZING and FANTASTIC were never given as much as a hint that the number of lines to a column was decreased from 45 lines to 43 lines. That means roughly 5% less sap to read. This you did not tell we the readers.

When you put these two things together that means 15% less fiction than before with the old reprint in. By the way, you might be wondering if I was a reprint addict of something. I am not in the least, but, when the reprint was there a more limited amount of de-

ception was used by you and your publisher.

You may be wondering what prompted me to look for unexcusable defects in your magazines in the first place. Today the September AMAZING came to me in the mail. In it of course is the portfolio that is inhabiting it much too much lately. I investigated it and saw that is 9 pages in length. I was startled to see that you did not have the right amount of fiction to occupy this meaningless space. Easily you could have fitted one or two stories to fill these pages. I gather this because you must have *some* stock available. If you don't (this does not seem likely, but, then again, things like this just might happen at Ultimate) happen to have any stories that you specifically selected, why not use some of that material that Malzberg selected which you said would eventually be used up.

Since I have been reading prozines (last December) I was under the impression that you, Mr. Ted White was the only honest editor around. My respect for you as a person has diminished somewhat but you still write the best damn stories around.

LAURENCE DIELLE

2491 Aztec Way  
Palo Alto, Calif. 94303

*I'm sorry you feel deceived, Laurence. The fact is that we have not decreased the percentage of new fiction in this magazine in (slightly) increasing the type size, nor in the reduction of lines per column (of which I was myself unaware). The loss, when there was a loss, was solely in the features, which you may have noticed have occasionally had to alternate with each other. The portfolios have always been added when, at the last minute, an overage in space became apparent, and it was too late to set any additional type. The portfolio in the September issue, for example, was added when the Science column failed to make its deadline and no book reviews were on hand (you'll notice the only features were the editorial, The Clubhouse and the letters). When we switched typesetters with our November issue, a slightly different typestyle was used*

(the old one was not available) which turned out to take up considerably more space than we'd expected. Again, the stories remained intact, but the features suffered. With this issue we have (I believe) returned to 8-point type for the features and 9-point type for the stories in an attempt to restore our previous wordage. (Some material set for last issue and held over is in the larger type.) It is not our policy or intention to practice any form of deceit upon you or any portion of our readership.—TW

Dear Mr. White:

Perhaps you have already read my letter to you about the August FANTASTIC. In it I said that I bought a FANTASTIC and an AMAZING two years ago and I never bought one since just recently. I liked the new FANTASTIC, even though fantasy isn't my bag. Well, I just was re-instated to AMAZING with the Sept. issue, and I can truly say that I was amazed at the improved quality of the magazine. Two years ago, I had thought of AMAZING as a nothing magazine, light-years away from the quality of *Analog* and *F & SF*. Now, on the basis of one issue, I've decided to become a lifetime subscriber to your mag.

The Sept. cover is great. It's even a match for many of the *F & SF* covers. The rich colors and the high gloss really stand out. The inside artwork stands out, also. *Except* for the illustration to "Earth to Earth." That picture looks like a little kid drew it. Otherwise, the art is very good.

"Jupiter Project" is very good. I'm particularly interested in the idea of a giant "can" in space. What an obvious improvement over an ordinary single-wheel station. The "Earthization" of Ganymede is interesting, also. All-in-all, this is a very good *Science* fiction story, just the kind I like.

"Fat City" and "Deflation 2001" were pretty funny. I thought "Fat City" might have been better off in FANTASTIC, but it was good, anyway. The situation described in "Deflation 2001" may just come true one

day, although it would probably be much later than 2001. The "Triple-E's" described in "Lifeboat" are interesting, to say the least. Are the "Triple-E's" really scientifically feasible, or are they just a pseudo-scientific idea thought up in the author's mind? The idea behind "Proof" was one that I had never thought of before. I always assumed that, if it's possible to go back in time, you should be able to return. I don't really have too much to say about "Earth to Earth." It didn't excite me, but it didn't turn me off, either. It was just a neutral-type story to fill up space.

When there is something wrong in a magazine, I like to tell the editor about it in the hope that he will try to correct it. The reason that my letter paints such a glowing picture of the Sept. AMAZING is because there just isn't that much wrong with it. I have been a devout science fiction fan for the past 6 1/2 years, ever since I was 11, and AMAZING has just been put on my permanent reading list.

TONY CVETKO  
29415 Parkwood Drive  
Wickliffe, Ohio 44092

Dear Mr. White,

I just bought the new AMAZING today and there are a few things I would like to comment on.

For instance, the addition of the portfolios. The Sept. AMAZING is only the third issue of your magazine that I have bought, so I don't know if you had them before. I never saw the reprints you used to publish, either, but I have read about them in your letter column. It seems to me like you have substituted the reprints with the portfolios. Don't get me wrong, I like art, but I would rather read an 8 or 9 page story than look at those pictures. Anyway, now is as good a time as any to compliment you on your original artwork. I don't know why people are always writing you to get different artists to do covers for you. I think your covers are more colorful than anything I've seen elsewhere. I liked the Don Davis cover on this issue better than the cover for the Au-

gust *Analog*, which was done by Kelly Freas. The first issue of *AMAZING* that I ever bought featured Mike Hinge (May '72) on the cover. If it weren't for those—wow!—colors, I never would have noticed you in your obscure position on the magazine stand. Personally, I think you print the best covers I've seen.

Even in the short time which has elapsed over the past three issues, I have noticed a few changes in your mag. Like the number of stories you publish. It dropped from seven in May to five in July. I see it is up to six in this issue. Anyway, it isn't quantity that counts. While none of the stories you publish are really *great*, all of them are good. Some of them are real good. I've learned that the author's name doesn't mean anything, also, because I never heard of the people that write for you (until now, and I won't forget them) and I still liked their stories.

Which brings us to the articles. I noticed the absence of the book reviews and *The Science in Science Fiction*. I think you're better off without them. I like your editorials better than *Analog's* (I don't know of any other mags that print them) and I really like *The Clubhouse*. I was shocked to read that John Berry won't be writing it anymore, but at least I see that you will continue it. I hope you get someone as good as John to write it; he did a great job and it was one of the big reasons I buy your magazine. I hope you have some really good surprise next issue because *The Clubhouse* column was my favorite. Thanks for introducing me to fanzines. By the way, do you have any idea what John is going to do now? Will he be writing for another magazine, or for any particular fanzines? As long as he keeps writing, I want to keep reading him.

Well, that's about it. I think you have the most comprehensive letter column of any magazine (fanzine, too) and I hope you keep up the good work. Maybe after you win the Hugo this year circulation will jump, eh?

ROBERT ELLIS

13334 Nadine

Huntington Wds., Mich., 48070

*See my earlier comments on the portfolios. Yes, John Berry will continue to write for the fanzines, and you can probably find him in future issues of those fanzines he most enjoyed reviewing . . . —TW*

Dear Ted,

I am sorry to hear that John Berry will no longer be with us. Even though *The Clubhouse* was of no real importance to me, I always enjoyed the column for its beautiful writing style. Best luck to Mr. Berry! You sure were correct about the Davis cover. It is a masterpiece! The only thing, for me, that detracted from it was the little blue watchamacallit. But that is a very minor point, and I can't wait for the next cover! I am saving the serial, as usual, so I'd like to talk about the shorts. All of them were excellent, but the most interesting for me was "Lifeboat", not in subject matter but in *style*. The use of slang in dialog, describing the triple-e suit without losing the story-line, and just general plotting, are all very reminiscent of the early Heinlein. I had just finished reading Panshin's excellent *Heinlein in Dimension*, in fact, when the magazine arrived. Even both first titles are similar: "Life-line" was Heinlein's. And if Mr. Pflock shows this same writing ability in his next stories, I bet he will make a major name for himself in this business!

Now, as to my letter and your reply: I concede the point that the basis of "Christopher Street" was in careful extrapolation. However, to quote Alexei Panshin: "The idea is nothing, the writing is all." I thought at the time of that writing and still do, that "Christopher Street" was rotten! In an earlier letter, I remarked that I judged your writing style by that one story. I apologize. Through the miracle of back issues, I have now read four of your previous stories in both magazines and found them all to be well written, though provoking, and interesting, the complete opposite of "Christopher Street". I have a more important gripe, however. It concerns a misquote in your comments to my letter: just two little

words, but they changed my entire meaning. In quotes: "not innocent", what I said: "not convinced." Two entirely different meanings. Thank you for recommending Michner's book. I am sure that I will be able to find a copy soon. I, in turn, would like to recommend a book to you. It might help you understand my high regard for the San Diego and LA police. The book is *The New Centurions*, and it might show you what a cop feels like during a riot. I still have an open mind about Kent State. I hope you do about cops.

KEN GAMMAGE, JR.  
7865 E. Roseland Dr.  
La Jolla, Ca., 92037

*I have carefully reread my comments on your letter in the September issue and I cannot find any misquote of "not convinced" to "not innocent." You said, ". . . I am not convinced, not by a long shot, that the 4 martyred students ( . . . ) are blameless." My comments reads: "You need to read (James Michener's book) if you really think that a student on his way to class who is shot down by a bullet in the back is "not blameless." You might also check out the history of the LA police in black ghetto areas like Watts, and the extreme right-wing bias of both the LA and the San Diego police.—TW*

Ted:

I'll try to not make the mistake of Dave Hulvey's mistake of overextending myself . . . some of what he said was great, but whoever stole his typewriter would be giving a great gift to mankind. Therefore, I'll try to say everything as quickly as possible: The cover of your September issue was beautiful; I have been reading your magazine longer than you have been editing it, but just long enough to know what you have done to it, and you stand to be congratulated; my prayers for the Hugo (for AMAZING, which I have slightly more appreciation for); the reprint shall not be missed here, however, I am unsophisticated enough to have enjoyed it. The portfolios are fun.

Ted, your response to Gammage's letter was brilliant. I was beginning to lose faith in you in a few of your past lengthy charades in various matters, but this was a piece of art. How often we forget standards as years go by; it has always amused me that while a poll showed 3-to-1 belief that the youth were responsible for their own tragic death, the Boston Massacre, which led us into revolution 200 years ago, where 2 or 3 people died, is no problem to us—we blame the guard, at that time on duty for Britain instead of Tricky Dick, at that time violently provoked. How our double-standards show—few would call Kent State a massacre. And to blame the students for a tragic incident of poor timing and training (why are our guard so poorly trained that they panicked at a time of crisis when their cool was most important? Why do they have to be trained to kill, to see their confronters as nothing but "enemy", their latest target?) is so pathetic it makes one truly sad. The police situation has been much the same; we have forced a poorly trained force taught only on brute instincts into a situation where they should be able to but can't handle themselves. Thus, the crisis of the day. The police run by the paranoid group stereotypes and react violently, thus Kent State, thus Chicago, thus all the other crisis of police confrontation. This is a sad reflection on our society, which rather than question a man with a badge (or public office or uniform) blames the students for Kent State, the prisoners for Attica and the yippies for Chicago. The Britishers, by the way, seem to handle themselves much better; they don't carry weapons and they rarely use force and, besides the recent labor strike (where no one was seriously hurt) have had few problems.

This thing particularly bothers me because I have been in protest rallies (never violent) when the cops watch us like hawks and have that nervous twitch that so distinguishes them. Meanwhile, while we are carrying on peacefully, there are robbers and rapists and murderers unattended.—sigh—Incidentally, I enjoyed "3 AM Late Afternoon on Chris-

topher Street" or whatever very much, and here is one middle american who appreciates your speaking up and hope you continue.

Incidentally, I know who Dr. Wertham really is if anybody is interested.

MICHAEL DEETER

714 Bond Street

North Manchester, Ind. 46962

*Well, that's a great exit line. So tell us: who is Dr. Wertham, really?—TW*

And with that summation, we wrap it up

again for another issue. This issue was prepared about a month earlier than usual, in order to give me time off for a leisurely cross country drive to Albuquerque and Los Angeles and back; by the time you read this, the LaCon will be old business and we'll know who won the Hugos this year. Both AMAZING and FANTASTIC are in contention this time, the latter for the first time, and it will be interesting to discover the outcome of the voting. I'll let you know.

—TED WHITE

## THE SCIENCE IN SCIENCE FICTION (continued from page 94)

space wars fought with tachyonic weapons will never take place. The sleek interstellar probes and Star Liners that would have been driven by tachyonic

propulsion are fading into mist, their full-throated roars hushed forever. If you listen, though, maybe you can still hear the echoes...

## THE FUTURE IN BOOKS (continued from page 109)

lized savages, "engaged in a furious fight for living and enjoyment, with ethic and aesthetic ideals not clearly differentiated from theoretical statements. . ." There are also many advanced and interesting scientific predictions/ideas present, apparently, in *Two Planets*; Lasswitz is supposed to be the first sf author to suggest the use of a space station for travel to other planets, for instance. The dominance of English-language writers in sf has caused those from other countries to be neglected, and Franz Rottensteiner presents an interesting view of a forgotten but important German sf author.

There's much more here: "*Stand on Zanzibar: The Novel As Film*," by Norman Spinrad, Alexei Panshin's first "SF in Dimension" column from FANTASTIC, "*J. G. Ballard: The Wounded Land*," by Brian Aldiss, and other topics as diverse as C. S. Lewis, *2001: A Space Odessey*, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and Frankenstein are all discussed. Some of the essays tend

toward what one might call "prolix and unnecessary pedagogical fustian"—i.e., they don't say in two words what they can say in twenty, quote Latin or French to illustrate their points, and if the author can think of any other possible way to make his article more obscure or difficult to understand, that's just find: that will only help to make it seem more profound. But for the most part *SF: The Other Side of Realism* manages to avoid this, and the result is a very stimulating, readable book. The editor should be congratulated.

(Since it's highly unlikely that your local bookstore will stock this book, you'll have to order it direct from the publishers: Bowling Green Popular Press, Center for the Study of Popular Culture, University Hall 101, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio 43403. Postage paid on all orders.)

—Cy Chauvin

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- "How another user Teleported a gold jewel box to her, seemingly out of thin air!"
- "How a woman used this method to regain her lost youth!"
- "How a man, growing bald, claims he renewed the growth of his hair with this secret!"
- "How a woman used it to bring her mate to her, without asking!"
- "How another woman summoned a man to her—out of thin air!"
- "How a man heard the unspoken thoughts of others, with this secret!"
- "How a woman saw behind walls and over great distances, with it!"
- "How a man broadcast silent commands that others had to obey!"

Let us now clearly demonstrate to you the scientific basis behind the new wonderworking, Miracle of TELECULT POWER!

## "How Telecult Power Brings Any Desire Easily And Automatically!"

For many years, Reese P. Dubin dreamed of a way to call upon the invisible forces at work all around us. He spent a lifetime digging and search-

ing for the secret. These investigations brought him knowledge that goes back to the dim recesses of the past.

*One day, to his astonishment, he discovered that he could actually broadcast silent commands, which others instantly obeyed. Using the secret he tells you about in this book, he tried it time after time — commanding others to sleep, get up and come to him, talk or not talk — and act according to his silent wishes. It worked every time!*

Working relentlessly from this evidence, Reese P. Dubin succeeded in perfecting a new kind of instrument — called a Tele-Photo Transmitter — that concentrates your thoughts, and sends them like a streaking bullet to their destination!

**OTHERS OBEY SILENT COMMANDS!** Writing of the success of this method, one user reports the following experience:

*"I willed her to pick up and eat a biscuit from a plate in a corner of the room. She did so. I willed her to shake hands with her mother. She rushed to her mother and stroked her hands . . .*

*"I willed her to nod. She stood still and bent her head, I willed her to clap her hands, play a note on the piano, write her name, all of which she did."*

*"No one can escape the power of this method,"* says Mr. Dubin. "Everybody — high or low, ignorant or wise — all are subject to its spell! And unless the person is told what's being done, he will think the thoughts are his own!"

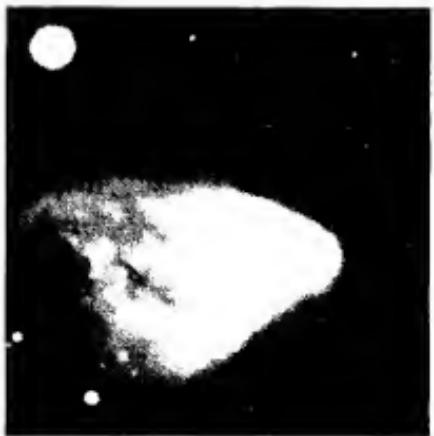
**HEARS THE THOUGHTS OF OTHERS!** Experimenting further with the Tele-Photo Transmitter, Reese P. Dubin soon found that he could "tune in" and HEAR the unspoken thoughts of others. He says, "At first, these hearing impressions startled me, and I took them for actual speech, until I realized that people don't usually say such things aloud! And their lips remained closed."

**SEES BEYOND WALLS, AND OVER GREAT DISTANCES!** Then he discovered he could pick up actual sights, from behind walls and over great distances! And when he "tuned in" he could see actual living scenes before him—as clear as the picture on a television screen!

**MAKES WOMAN APPEAR — SEEMINGLY OUT OF THIN AIR!** With mounting excitement, Reese P. Dubin launched one of the most exciting experiments in the history of psychic research. He wanted to see if the Tele-Photo Transmitter could bring him an actual material object! He chose, for this experiment, the seemingly impossible: an actual living person!

*He simply focused the Tele-Photo Transmitter, by dialing the object of his desire. In a flash the door burst open, and there — standing before him, as real as life — was his long-lost cousin!*

He stared and rubbed his eyes, and looked



again! There — smiling, with arms outstretched in greeting — stood living proof of the most astounding discovery of the Century!

### Dial Any Treasure!

You'll see how to use the Tele-Photo Transmitter, to summon your desires. This special instrument — your mental equipment — requires no wires, and no electricity. "Yet," says Mr. Dubin, "it can teleport desires, swiftly from the invisible world."

*When you dial your desire — whether for riches, love, or secret knowledge — you capture its invisible, photoplasmic form, at which point "it starts to materialize!" says Dr. Dubin.*

"Telecult Power can work seeming miracles in your life," says Mr. Dubin. "With it, it is possible to dial any desire — called a Photo-Form — then sit back, relax, and watch this powerful secret go to work!"

### "Instantly Your Life Is Changed!"

With this secret, the mightiest force in the Universe is at your command! "Simply ask for anything you want," says Mr. Dubin, "whether it be riches, love, fine possessions, power, friends, or secret knowledge!"

Suppose you had dialed Photo-Form #2 for Jewels, for example. That's what Margaret C. did, in an actual example Mr. Dubin tells you about. Rich, glittering diamonds and jewels literally appeared at her feet: a pair of gold earrings, which she found that morning . . . a surprise gift of a pearl necklace, and matching silver bracelets . . . a beautiful platinum ring set with emeralds and diamonds, dropped on her front lawn!

"Almost overnight," says Mr. Dubin, "it can start to multiply riches, bring romance and love . . . draw favors, gifts, new friends . . . or anything else asked for! It isn't necessary for you to understand why. What is important is that it has already worked for many others . . . men and women in all walks of life . . . worked every time . . . and it will work for you, too!"

### Brings A Pocket Full Of Money!

You'll see how Jerry D. used this method. He was broke a week before payday. All he did, he says, was to dial Photo-Form #1. Suddenly he felt a bulge in his pocket. Lo and behold! He took

out a roll of money . . . fives, tens, twenties . . . and more! Obviously, it had been placed there — but when? And by whom?

### A Brand New Car Comes!

Marty C., a taxi driver, reports that he just dialed Photo-Form #4, sat back, relaxed, and waited for things to happen. In a short time, great excitement filled the house. His wife came hurrying in, saying, "We won it! We won a car and a cash prize! They just delivered it!" He got up and went to the window. There, big and beautiful, standing in the driveway, was a brand new Cadillac!

### Brings Mate Without Asking!

Mrs. Conrad B. reports that she was tired of "pursuing" her husband, as she called it. She wanted him to voluntarily do the things she longed for, take her places, show affection. But he hadn't looked at her in years. He would fall asleep immediately after supper, or watched the ball games, or read the papers. Secretly Mrs. B. decided to try this method. She dialed Photo-Form #9 for Love! Instantly, her husband's attitude changed from boredom to interest and enthusiasm. And from that day forward, he showered her with kindness and affection! It was like a miracle come true!

### The Power Of This Method!

There are so many personal experiences which I could recount, stories of healing, wealth, and happiness with this secret, that I find myself wanting to tell all of them at once. Here are just a few . . .

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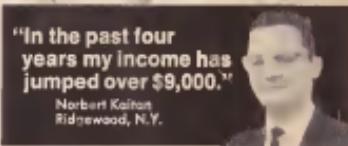
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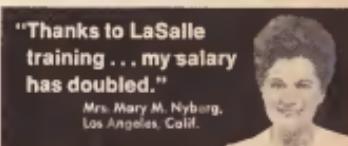
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